

# CTR

## Community Television Review

Volume 7, No. 4  
Winter 1984  
\$3.00



**FOCUSING ON  
LOCAL ORIGINATION**





**8th ANNUAL**

# *Hometown USA Video Festival*

Deadline for entries—March 31st, 1985  
Sponsored by NFLCP Phone: (202) 544-7272  
Contact NFLCP, 906 Pennsylvania Avenue, S.E.,  
Washington, D.C. 20003

**1985**



## Volume 7, No. 4

The Community Television Review is published quarterly by the National Federation of Local Cable Programmers. Send subscriptions, memberships, and inquiries to NFLCP, 906 Pennsylvania Ave., S.E., 20003. Subscriptions come with membership in the NFLCP: Community Associate/Student \$35/year, Professional \$50/year, Patron \$100/year, Non-profit organizations \$90/year, For-profit organizations \$150/year. A subscription can be obtained separately for \$12/year for individuals, \$20/year for libraries, or \$30/year for organizations. *Contents Copyright* © 1985 by the National Federation of Local Cable Programmers, Inc.—Non-profit tax exempt organizations may reprint items from the CTR (with exception of materials copyrighted by others), provided they credit CTR and notify the NFLCP of the reprinting. All others must obtain advance written permission.

**Editorial Board:**

Susan Bednarczyk, Trisha Dair, Jean Rice, Bill Rushton, George Stoney, Karen Kalergis

**Managing Editor:**

Paul D'Ari

**Design & Layout:**

Evans Graphics

**Advertising:**

Paul D'Ari (202) 544-7272

**Cover Photo:**

Lauren Pooler

(Media General's live news cablecast in Fairfax County, Virginia)

**NFLCP BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

Margie Nicholson, *Chairperson*; Jan Leshner, *Vice-Chair*; William J. Tierney, *Treasurer*; Sally Roethle, *Secretary*; George Stoney; Dirk Koning; Rika Welsh; Trisha Dair; Frank Jamison; Speranza Avram; Fred Johnson; Lamonte Ward; Karen Kalergis; Martha Schmidt; Grep Epler Wood; Alan Bushong; Jay Smith; Joe Van Eaton; Barbara Balitz; Paul Braun; Dave Olive; Chuck Sherwood; Roxie Cole.

**TABLE OF CONTENTS**

<b>Local Origination</b>	
Introduction	4
✓ The Illustrious Past of Local Origination	5
The Dollars and Sense of Local Origination	8
Local Cable Advertising: Profit Power	9
Managing Your Advertising Operation	10
A Creative Approach to Alpha Numerics	12
Establishing A Commercial Insertion System	14
Local Origination in Portland: A Lesson to Be Learned	16
Leased Access Flourishes in Athens	20
* Leased Access Cadillac Style	23
<b>Public Policy</b>	
Leased Access and the New Cable Law	24
* Cable Communications Policy Act of 1984: What It Means For Access	26
Rules and Procedures For Allocating Unused PEG Access Channels	28
<b>General</b>	
Establishing Government Access Policies	29
Networking: Vertical, Horizontal, Hard, and Soft	31
Classified Ads	34

# INTRODUCTION

This is the first time we have devoted an entire issue of CTR to local origination (L.O.). This is long overdue, but in many respects the content of CTR reflects the continuing evolution of NFLCP. The NFLCP was founded by community programming advocates in the mid-1970s and most of the CTR issues focused on some aspect of public, educational and governmental access because of the founders' commitment to community involvement in local programming. However, in the last few years, NFLCP has recognized that L.O. programming is also an extremely important community service, and we have taken an increasing amount of interest in its welfare.

We feel it is particularly critical at this time to demonstrate support for L.O. programming. In many new large urban systems, L.O. appears to be in serious jeopardy. Prospects for its future may hinge on disparate corporate personalities within an industry that does not wholeheartedly embrace program production as a part of its business.

This has not always been the case. L.O. enjoyed a brief renaissance at the height of the franchising wars between 1978 and 1983. Due to the intense competition for franchises in large urban areas, L.O. realized a major expansion. During this period multiple system cable operators (MSOs) promised almost anything—low basic rates, a substantial amount of community programming, expensive services with unknown revenue potential, and 100 plus channels—all in exchange for the exclusive right to sell movies and sports to the big cities.

L.O. was part of the package. The industry used the lure of local programming as a marketing tool. Cable operators dazzled the big cities during the franchising process by having their cameras at community events; in so doing they demonstrated that Main Street was something special.

Many of the winning companies spent hundreds of thousands of dollars to build highly advanced studios all across the nation. For example, in Portland, Oregon Rogers Cablesystems provided nine L.O. theme channels with each channel focusing on one of the following: arts programming, programming for the hearing impaired, Black programming, government programming, sports programming, environmental programming, health programming, and an L.O. programming showcase.

However, the honeymoon did not last long. Due in part to the nature of competitive bidding, many operators (in their overzealousness to win franchises) promised more than they could deliver. As a result almost immediately following this major wave of franchising, the cut-backs began.

This practice was highlighted last year by Warner-Amex Chairman Drew Lewis when he announced that his company would not complete the elaborate systems promised in Milwaukee, Dallas, Houston, Cincinnati, Chicago and Pittsburgh. Cut-backs are now taking place all around the country as many other MSOs are also renegotiating significant modifications to their franchise agreements. L.O. is a frequent victim of the cut-backs.

The cut-backs are due in part to financial difficulties that many large urban builds are experiencing. Few of these systems have completed construction, and their market penetration is well below what was projected. In addition, many of the franchise agreements were unrealistic, and it was inevitable that many operators would scale down their service.

It is currently true that the economics of cable television precludes such extravagant L.O. operations as was originally developed in Portland, Oregon. However, many MSOs have not given realistic L.O. operations the opportunity to blossom. The industry general-

ly expects advertising sales to pay for L.O., but they are not willing to take the necessary steps to build an audience for L.O. The sales operations of many cable systems are given little motivation to promote L.O. to the cable subscribers as their bonuses are usually based on premium movie channel sales. In addition, L.O. is often not promoted once subscribers have signed up. More often than not, cable program guides feature premium channels and do not include any mention of L.O.

In spite of the numerous problems facing L.O. in the mid-1980s, there were enough gains during the franchising years to ensure a future for L.O. Although the contracts that were signed with substantial commitments to local programming are being substantially modified with cut-backs—it is only in a very few cases that L.O. is being eliminated altogether. This is a far cry from the massive purge of L.O. in the mid-1970s. At that time, many staff were abruptly fired and hundreds of L.O. operations were virtually eliminated overnight. Today, franchising authorities are in place to protect at least modest L.O. operations. And L.O. exists on a number of systems because more members of the industry are beginning to realize its potential and importance.

What follows in this issue of CTR is a celebration of local origination. We are presenting a collection of articles that examines a number of L.O. operations, the various issues that confront L.O. and L.O.'s potential as a viable cable service. We also present practical information on how to operate a successful L.O. operation.

**Trisha Dair  
and  
Paul D'Ari**



# The Illustrious Past of Local Origination

by Brian Owens

Origination was a common term in Television-Land in the 1950s and 1960s (both here and in England) for the production of television programs. The term originate means to create, to do yourself, to bring into being. "Local origination" seems redundant: to do something yourself locally. The term, however, was adopted by commercial and educational TV stations in the fifties to explain their activity of producing TV programs themselves. Later it appears to have almost completely disappeared except in England, where origination still today is synonymous with TV production; and in cable television, where local origination refers to a cable TV system producing and sponsoring its own television programs. This latter activity actually is quite complex, as its scale, motivation, means, and presentation all have great variety. A good approach to understand cable local origination today is to look at its rocky past.

## The Beginning

Local origination is almost as old as cable TV itself. Several cable operators have claimed they were doing "L.O." in the 1950s. One Montana operator told me that his 500-subscriber cable TV system in the early 1950s had a huge TV camera that they would dolly out in front of their business office every year and cover the 4th of July parade live, as well as cover other downtown activities. Apparently this same camera generally was used to shoot index cards which revolved with an electric motor, displaying community events and local ads.

Another cable pioneer, Buford Saville, started L.O. in 1953. He operated a three channel system in Cumberland, Maryland, and needed programs for his third channel—so he did them himself. He bought a couple of black and white cameras, a simple switcher, lights, and microphones, and began producing live children's programs. It was a selling point to have parents able to watch their children in talent shows, talking with a clown, and responding in any way to the camera. Saville started a news program, then a sports talk show, and finally, he purchased a projector so that 16 mm films could be shown. Since remote and tape productions were not possible, all Cumberland programs were live

for many years. Today, over thirty years later, L.O. programming is still alive and well in Cumberland, although a year ago Buford sold his cable TV system to TeleCommunications, Inc. (TCI).

By the late 1960s there were at least thirty cable TV systems originating their own programs. There might have been more, but there were several limitations. Equipment was a major problem. Videotape recorders only became available in the late fifties, and these were very expensive (upwards of \$100,000). In the mid-1960s lower cost video formats, chiefly from Ampex, GE, and RCA, were available, but they were crude, problematic, and still relatively expensive (\$15-20,000 for a VTR). Black and white cameras were bulky, typically had turret lens, and again, were expensive. It wasn't until the Sony one-half inch portapak came into the U.S. market, in 1968, that most cable TV companies afford TV equipment. At this time most cable systems were rural. There were only about fifty systems with more than 10,000 subscribers at the end of the 1960s, and cable rates were typically \$5 per month.

However, L.O. was growing. The increased competition among equipment manufacturers, rapidly improved the video quality, brought down prices and offered smaller portable equipment so that more people could produce programs. Thus, the small format video revolution increased the feasibility of L.O. With smaller investments required by the late 1960's, L.O. began to grow significantly. At that time cable operators found L.O. an attractive venture for the following reasons:

1. Ego—The cable system, if locally owned, recognized an opportunity to become the TV station of the local town. In many cases the system owner himself ran L.O. and was often the station's chief personality. While television was exciting, running an operation which resembled a utility was not, and L.O. allowed local cable operators to become celebrities.

2. Entrepreneurship—Some cable operators saw L.O. as a potential money-making activity. In systems where subscriber saturation was flat (there was no pay TV at this time), L.O. could be a means to increase revenues. Cable systems typically had no

broadcast TV stations in their community, so L.O. was a relatively low cost investment for initiating a TV station and advertising operation in a community.

3. Public Relations—A few cable operators sponsored L.O. as a means to justify rate increases, to extend franchises, and to keep on the good side of the city fathers. By producing local news programs as well as covering local events, they achieved recognition for community service and for creating a lot of excitement in communities where TV coverage was previously unknown.

## L.O. Comes to the Cities

As cable television entered the 1970s, two other reasons caused a massive increase in local origination: cable's entry into the urban marketplace, and the FCC's 1972 rules requiring L.O. in many markets.

Cable TV technology had been developing all through the 1960s. In 1970, the 23 channel system was possible and the 35 channel system was on the horizon. Cable had saturated the rural markets where TV reception was unavailable without cable. When large companies, such as General Electric, Warner, and Cox newspapers began acquiring cable TV systems—the spread of cable TV into the cities seemed inevitable. Cable's success in large urban areas depended upon both developing new services and winning FCC approval (since wiring urban markets was effectively restricted in the late 1960s).

Several urban franchises were awarded prior to the FCC's restrictions, and the industry began developing local origination programming on a broad scale. Sizeable investments in L.O. were made in Manhattan, San Diego, San Francisco, Tulsa, Long Island, Seattle, Akron, Toledo, and other cities. The industry purchased color equipment, built large studios, designed mobile vans, and hired broadcast TV veterans.

In the early 1970s signs reading "We have cable TV" were plastered outside of bars all through Manhattan and Long Island. These signs were referring to the L.O. channel, which was producing the New York Knicks basketball and Rangers hockey games. This L.O. activity spurred the carrying of all Madison Square Garden events, and it later evolved into the USA Network. In San Diego



one could watch the popular San Diego State football games on L.O. San Francisco emphasized Chinese language programs, and children's shows were the staple of Buckeye's programming in Toledo.

United Cable TV in Tulsa actually ran eight local origination channels on its new 35-channel system in 1973. Because two microwaved Dallas independent stations were the only additional services available, L.O. supplied the diversity and excitement that cable was trying to sell in this urban, broadcast market. Tulsa had its own L.O. sports channel, L.O. children's channel, L.O. public affairs channel, etc. However, the expectations and scope of this endeavor was not realistic, and within a year all L.O. in Tulsa was discontinued.

The amount and variety of urban L.O. was staggering. Whereas rural L.O. had consistently done news programs, urban L.O. turned to ethnic news, astrology news, kids news, whole food news, Vietnam veterans news. L.O. in many places began to look a lot like public access. L.O. staff were interested in increasing audiences. Their programs were being used to market the system and, in fact, many times the cable company's marketing department dictated the kinds of programming it was interested in: "narrowcasting." Since the urban broadcast TV stations were serving mass audiences, cable needed to produce for specialized audiences. They were particularly interested in foreign language programs, political coverage (such as city council meetings or candidates debates), high school sports, and children's programs (with children demonstrating their talents and waving to mom and dad).

Regulation was a major impetus for L.O.'s expansion in the 1970s. It began when two large companies, American Cablevision and Teleprompter, agreed to merge to become the largest cable TV company in 1971. A condition for approval of the merger by the FCC was that all Teleprompter systems had to originate community service programming, and that Teleprompter had to produce, distribute, and carry educational and cultural programming on these systems as well. By 1973, 108 Teleprompter systems all over the country had color studios and were producing L.O. and carrying "Leslie the Shreve,"

"The Science Fair," and other programs produced at Teleprompter Manhattan (the producers of these programs later formed Satori Productions to continue these productions, and later became an "adult" pay TV service).

In 1972 the FCC adopted cable rules that allowed cable expansion into the urban marketplace, and established local programming requirements as a quid pro quo for the easing of restrictions on wiring urban areas. The new rules not only required cable systems (with 3,500 subscribers or more) to provide public, educational, governmental, and leased access; it required operators to provide local origination programming as well. As a result, many more multiple system operators started L.O. on a grand scale. Warner, American Television and Communications Corporation (ATC), Continental, General Electric and others soon had color studios and local origination staff in many of their systems.

### The Golden Age of L.O.

I conducted two comprehensive local origination surveys when I worked for the National Cable Television Association (NCTA) from 1972 to 1974. The second survey, in early 1974, found 589 cable TV systems in all 50 states (and Guam) doing L.O. They reached about 4.7 million subscribers, or about 65% of all cable TV subscribers at that time. In about 20% of those systems L.O. was

produced by a third party: generally a school, college, or public access operation. The other 80% (493) had L.O. produced by the cable company. Advertising was used by 70% of these L.O. operations. A survey of their programming showed 377 systems producing sports, 370 had public affairs programs, 255 presented news, 171 cablecast children's shows, and 169 purchased syndicated materials. This was the golden age of local origination.

I was also in charge of NCTA's "Cablecasting Awards," the forerunner of their ACE awards. In 1974 we had more than nine hundred entries for these awards and had to use five regions for our judging, with the regional winners becoming eligible for the national awards. It is very similar to the NFLCP's Hometown Festival Award winners because the content of L.O. in the early 1970s was very similar to access.

In fact at times, L.O. was more of an alternative community medium than public access. While public access in the early 1970s depended upon the interests of young people fascinated with the portapak, L.O. in many medium-sized towns and cities was covering virtually every aspect of that community's life. The host of an L.O. show "Are You Listening" in Toledo, Ohio explained the premise of her show this way: "Some people say we have become a nation of strangers.



*Former Miss America Nancy Fleming, now with Lifetime, hosted Corner Table, a restaurant review show, on Viacom of San Francisco in 1972.*



We know more about outer space than we do each other. The people you are about to meet are real people . . . You may know them as a national problem. We want you to know them as people . . . shop stewards, policemen, women, freaks, prison guards, welfare mothers, drug addicts, judges, black high school girls, etc. I want to underline the bands of human concern so that the differences in age, sex, color, religion, nationality can be enjoyed rather than feared."

Sports programs on L.O. included high school football and quarter midget races in Terre Haute, chariot racing in Pocatello, Idaho, safe snowmobiling certification lessons in Saulte Ste. Marie, and chess matches and horse shoe pitching in Levitown, Pennsylvania. As the L.O. operation wrote me from Johnstown, Pennsylvania; "We put together our own 'Wide World of Sports' and concentrate only on local sporting activities including, track meets, Cub Scout Pinewood derby races, ping pong and pogo stick competition."

Local origination was very aggressive in public affairs programming. Vietnam, civil rights, women's liberation, and drugs were major issues, and these were reflected in cable programming. Leuiston Cablevision produced a six-part series, "Voices of War," using teachers from Bowdoin College as participants. Newport Beach's "Women Who Wait" interviewed wives of POWs. There were many programs concerned with drugs, teenagers, and the generation gap. The heart of public affairs, however, was the coverage of the local political scene. The 1974 survey found that a third of systems with L.O. carried city council meetings, and more than half covered election returns. Typically, reports from the mayor and U.S. Congressmen, candidates debates, bond issues, and city budget reviews were covered on L.O. channels. This may seem ordinary now, but years ago this was not done to please the franchise regulators; it was done to attract audiences. At that time, politics and other controversial subjects could attract larger audiences, because immediately following the political activism of the 1960's, there was still a considerable amount of interest such matters.

Creating networks for local origination was a major problem in the early 1970s because of the myriad of video formats in use. In 1972 I found fifteen different and incompatible formats in use by cable systems, ranging from Akai 1/4" to Ampex 2" helical scan. Companies like Bell & Howell, Wollensak, Diamond Power, Westinghouse, Concord, and Shibaden, were trying to enter the video market, and there was a great deal of confusion, especially with non-EIA-J half-inch

video. This was soon solved by the rapid introduction and acceptance of the 3/4" videocassette format. Virtually every L.O. operation switched to 3/4" in 1972 or 1973 (except California, where for years the state association adopted the locally-manufactured IVC'1" format, in a losing battle with Japan's 3/4" technology).

Joseph Gans initiated the first regional cable network—the "Pennsylvania Cablecasting Committee"—in 1967. Gans and his fellow operators bicycled a series of black and white videotapes from both Nixon and Humphrey during the 1968 presidential campaign. The signal quality was poor and equipment expensive, but they expanded into program production with local talent and special events. By 1974 they had 51 cable TV systems on their network, and had involved most state politicians, Penn State University, the Chamber of Commerce, and some of their more sophisticated L.O. producers to form a "publicasting" network. This was done primarily for public relations. However, it also fulfilled a need to provide a new signal for Pennsylvania cable systems located within the broadcast coverage of Pittsburgh, Philadelphia, and Allentown. Similar networks were begun in Kansas, New Jersey, and Georgia. In order to attract additional advertisers, San Diego's Mission Cable TV, the largest cable TV system in the U.S., interconnected several nearby systems to form the "South California Cable Network" in 1974. In fact, this network actually outbid the three local broadcasters for the Hughes Sports Network and carried their football and basketball games to 160,000 subscribers, (about one-third of San Diego's total TV market).

## The Decline of L.O.

The expansion and growth of L.O. from 1970 to 1974 was rapid, but its decline developed even faster. In 1974 the cable industry experienced serious financial problems, brought on by economic recession and the industry's overestimation of cable's attractiveness in urban markets. In early 1974 Teleprompter was investigated by the SEC for faulty bookkeeping practices, and their stock was suspended from trading on the New York Stock Exchange. When Teleprompter returned to the market, the stock plummeted from a 1972 high of more than \$100 to about \$1.50 in 1974. Management responded to their money problems in a two-week period in the summer of 1974. They fired staff and pulled the plug on more than ninety of their L.O. operations. Other companies experienced similar falls in their stock, and banks tightened (and even stopped) lending to cable TV. Virtually every MSO cut local origination from

their systems unless it was critical to franchise obligations or marketing. The FCC never enforced the 1972 L.O. requirement, and turned their heads at the L.O. curtailments. Unfortunately, the communities that lost L.O. did not protest these moves, and in the view of many MSOs, this confirmed the notion that L.O. hadn't worked because it wasn't missed. This was an oversimplification, however, because many of the MSO system managers had not really supported it, and the overworked L.O. staffs had little time or skill to promote viewership.

The mid 1970s could be called the dark ages of local cable programming. However, many small, locally-owned cable companies, which generally did not experience the MSO's economic problems, did not cut programming.

In fact, some "mom-and-pop" operators responded to the ever-decreasing cost of color video equipment, and expanded their operations substantially. It should also be noted that a few MSOs (including ATC and Viacom) remained firmly committed to L.O.

With the demise of L.O. in the mid-1970s, the cable industry re-defined local origination to mean anything locally produced, which included weather gauges, index cards rotating on a wheel, or even a clock in front of a camera. When the NCTA surveyed L.O. again in 1978, they reported 923 systems undertaking local origination. However on closer examination of the material, I found that 60% of these systems were not doing genuine L.O. programming; they were automated channels, such as AP news, weather, and bulletin boards. The 1978 survey material seems to indicate that only 314 cable systems, or about half of the 1974 total, were doing L.O. or public access. And many of these would soon call L.O. quits as the recently launched super-station and satellite services eroded a perception that L.O. was filling the need for additional, non-broadcast programming in broadcast markets. Likewise, the availability of advertising time offered by satellite services diminished the advertising potential of local origination. The next phase of local origination growth would come from a single source—the franchising game as played by competing cable companies and their PR specialists.

---

*Brian Owens has been vice-president of Programming at Valley Cable TV in Los Angeles since 1981. From 1972 to 1974 he was director of Programming at the NCTA; he was a board member of the NFLCP, from 1978-1982.*



# The Dollars and Sense of Local Origination

by Paul Braun

Whether we are involved with local origination or some form of video access, be certain that at some point each of us will be asked to explain exactly how our efforts help to further the goals of our organization. Most of us can show a thick file full of thank you letters, or point to an award or two that our facility may have won, or even feel pride in a significant contribution to our community, but sometimes that isn't quite enough. As the vocation of local cable programming has become more sophisticated and complex, we have been given the opportunity, to develop not only creative video productions, but also the quantitative measures which can provide a bridge to the senior management of our organizations. I would like to share with you some hypotheses as well as some tools and techniques which might help in this communication.

***Local cable programming is, by comparison, a very inexpensive form of electronic communication.***

The basic reason why local origination works is because we can produce cheap yet effective television production. But do you know how cheap? Take your actual operating budget for one month and add it to 1/120th of the total cost of all your production equipment (this is one month's depreciation on a 10 year schedule). Then divide this by the number of hours of programming you produced for that same month. The number you obtain will be the breakeven cost of producing one hour of original programming. Now call the closest television production house and ask what it would cost to produce a one hour program at their facility. With this information you will know how inexpensive your facility is in comparison to your competition, and you will be able to explain this to your boss.

***Local cable programming can improve the image of your organization.***

One major weapon in the franchise wars was the offer of local production equipment as a tool to improve community communication. Now, after most of the battles are over, we seem to forget this tool is available not only to the community but to the organization which funds it. Develop a list of community

leaders. Include in your list those people who will grant the next rate increase and may hold hearings on the extent of your contribution to the community. At the same time develop a list of questions regarding what they think of your organization and what your strengths and weaknesses are. You can use their questions to develop a plan which builds on your organization's advantages and helps to remedy your organization's limitations, as they are perceived by the community leadership. In a year, after you have implemented your plan, do another one-on-one survey and compare the results. You should be able to attribute some or most of any change in opinion to your local programming plan. This can be shown as a concrete contribution to your organization.

***Local cable programming is alternative programming which can be used to sell cable television or anything else.***

ESPN, CNN or others are important services to the cable industry because they have the ability to reach, acquire, and retain potential subscribers. They can also reach a specific demographic target group in which an advertiser is interested. Local programmers need to market to potential subscribers, advertisers, and underwriters in order to prove that community programming can get results. Do promotions and track the response. Figure out ways to count and define the people who watch your programs. When you have call in shows, do follow-up interviews and find out who watches. Knowing this will give you ideas as to who to approach for underwriting or advertising. Set up "Tell 'em local Channel 5 sent you" activities. Arrange with the cable marketing people to give you coupons for discount installs which you can have your community producers hand out to their potential viewers. By counting these, you have another form of documentation.

***Local programming and production can be new revenue streams.***

In sociology, money is not an end in itself, but rather a way to measure power. By exploring the revenue opportunities at our command, we can also explore the alternatives for developing a power base through community programming. Develop a production

and programming rate card. Your production rate card should not be lower than your breakeven cost of production and should provide an adequate return on your organization's investment, just as if the organization had put the money in a bank. Even if you don't wind up charging, you still have a measure of the potential revenue or in-kind contributions you are providing. If you have ascertained the number and type of people watching your programming, you can figure out the number of exposures your programs can attain. From that calculation, you can develop a competitive cost per thousand programming rate card and once again measure the value of your activity.

***Local cable programming can gain importance as a documentation of the First Amendment rights of the cable industry.***

Local programmers are in an ongoing, stimulating relationship with the cable operators, which, if approached wisely, can be of mutual benefit. The cable operators need to demonstrate that they are electronic publishers and local programmers are the free lance writers from which cable companies will need to buy to establish a first person argument in support of the claim for First Amendment rights. We need each other. We will need to find ways to establish standards and a code of ethics which both groups will find useful.

In summary, creating programming is not enough. We, as local cable programmers, have a new and exciting challenge to not only produce programming, but to also document and communicate its importance which we know in our heart. To do less is to hide our heads in the sand, and to let the industry develop without our contributions. The cable industry needs and can use local programming and it is up to us to show them how and why.

---

*Paul Braun is the director of programming for the National Division of American Television and Communications and has been involved with local cable programming for over 12 years.*



# Local Cable Advertising: Profit Power!

by Ronald B. Kaatz

Every week, suburban communities throughout the country move faster and farther into the new electronic media era by awarding cable franchises, wiring up homes and signing up subscribers.

The impact of cable in the suburbs takes place at two levels—among viewers of cable and among advertisers who can use cable as an innovative selling medium.

Viewers in Highland Park, Illinois, for example, instead of choosing from three networks, four independent and one public television station, have a full 52 channel menu of national news, sports, entertainment, information and education further supplemented by a wide array of community programming and neighborhood events.

From an advertising standpoint, cable in these communities will create television opportunities for suburban merchants who have never been able to afford broadcast stations because of their advertising rates.

## Profiting From Local Origination

Today, between 800 and 1,000 of the nation's 6,500 cable systems have one or more local-origination channels. Each of these not only represents thousands of hours a year of programming; it also is a double edged revenue stream. Left unprogrammed, it results in viewer dissatisfaction, helps contribute to a loss of interest in cable, and in the end can contribute to revenue-reducing churn. It is a field left untilld that accumulates weeds!

Successfully programmed, these channels can increase and hold viewer interest, providing an added incentive for viewers to say, "I love my cable!" They also can provide for the development of a successful advertising revenue stream.

A growing number of cable systems around the country are looking for imaginative ways to turn their local-origination channels into advertising revenue-generating businesses. One example is, "The TV Automart," a video version of newspaper classified advertising that Group W Cable developed for its systems in the Los Angeles area. The hour-long show allows private-party auto sellers to do their own 90-second "infomercials" showing and describing their cars. An answering service lets potential buyers call and place

their bids on the advertised autos. In addition to private-party selling, "The TV Automart" offers time for businesses in the automotive aftermarket to demonstrate their products or services.

Another attempt to turn local-origination channels into commercial ventures is "Hollywood Weekly." It is a video movie guide with star interviews and show business news items in which movie companies pay to run their film promotions and listings where they are playing.

And in Phoenix, R/G Cable, a division of Phoenix Newspapers, introduced the Home Channel with 24 hours of videotaped informational advertising about homes and services associated with home ownership.

Each of these ventures has one common purpose—the development of new advertising revenue streams from local origination channels.

## A Creative Approach in Greenbay

In Greenbay, Wisconsin, the Home Video Shopper (HVS) operates 24-hours-a-day, seven days a week providing cable viewers with at home browsing and shopping. Every commercial message runs six times a day, and all advertising is grouped in a related category. Automobiles, auto repair, and tires are together, as are homes, interior decorators, paint, etc. The HVS producer-director works with the advertiser in developing messages from 30 seconds to 60 minutes in length. HVS is similar to the concept local newspapers use when they create special advertising sections. For example, a Christmas Gift Guide meets advertisers' holiday advertising needs in November-December. A Dining and Entertainment Guide is designed for local restaurants, nightclubs, lounges and ballrooms.

"Auto Buyer '84" was devoted to the arrival of 1984 automobiles and trucks. It featured both videotape presentations of the major auto and truck manufacturers and advertising by the dealers' auto accessory stores and repair services. In addition to reaching the 25,000 cable subscribers in Greenbay, "Auto Buyer '84" was fed to an additional 40,000 cable homes in northeastern Wisconsin and Upper Michigan.

## Touring The Country

The following are additional creative uses of cable advertising around the country:

- In Naples, Florida, Palmer Cablevision created local advertiser-related programs that includes a garden shop, a home exchange, a money show and a boating feature.
- Albuquerque Cablevision couples local commercials and coupons with advertising inserts in their monthly subscriber billing statement. In other markets, cable operators similarly find it is quite effective to offer local clients a package combining cable spots with cable guide ads and bill stuffers and local newspaper space.
- In Grand Rapids, Michigan, Computerland sponsored a 28-minute "infomercial" produced by Apple Computer. It was promoted via newspaper ads and took advantage of cable's potential to provide a detailed picture of a product.
- In Louisville, a cable system carried a real estate listing and home improvement channel. During the day, there were 10-second clips with audio of homes for sale, plus longer messages for apartment and condominium complexes. In the evening, these listings were intermingled with home care programming.

A successful seller of cable advertising is Lakes Cablevision, serving 11,500 homes in McHenry and Lake Counties, Illinois. On this system stores and services can run local spots on the major cable satellite networks or advertise on a wide array of local programming, including high school sports, band concerts, plays and local news and interviews. Lakes Cablevision—like other innovative cable systems—talks to local advertisers about how cable will give them the same video impact generally affordable only to the large stores and services in Chicago.

In many cases, local newspapers and cable systems are joining forces for "creative selling." One such imaginative company is Leader Tele-Cable, which publishes the *Eau Claire Leader Telegram* in Eau Claire, Wisconsin. Not only do they publish an electronic

continued on page 34



# Managing Your Advertising Operation

by Margie Nicholson

Not long ago the potential of local cable advertising was in serious doubt. Advertisers were skeptical because local cable channels cannot deliver large audiences and the cable medium is not equipped to provide audience measurement statistics comparable to what the broadcasting industry regularly provides. However, today the concept of advertising within the context of narrowcasting has gained a wider acceptance, and cable advertising revenues are growing every year. In 1984 advertising revenues are estimated at \$550 million and revenues are projected to reach \$800 million in 1985.

Although it is now well established that local cable advertising can be a profitable venture in a large number of communities, many system operators in potentially lucrative markets have not yet taken advantage of this important revenue source. L.O. advertising's continued growth is inevitable, but the experiences are limited in this end of the business, and many operators still need to learn the basics. The following will help the uninitiated get started.

Let's assume your system is built and operating with a minimum of 4,000 subscribers and 30 to 40 percent penetration. Let's also assume you've studied your market and the competition, and have established that your ad base potential looks good. After establishing a local programming department with at least a skeleton crew on board, it is time to focus on the following factors: planning, personnel, packaging, prospects, presentations, and promotions.

## Planning

First, take inventory of your current channel line-up and all your resources to see where ads can be sold. Advertising can be sold on automated channels, local origination channels, and satellite channels (for commercial insertion). Revenue may also be obtained from advertising in your program guide, inserts in monthly bills mailed to all subscribers, or even billboards on your service trucks. Also don't overlook other business opportunities in your local programming department through commercial and corporate production. Perhaps you can generate some additional revenue by covering area news events as a stringer for ESPN, CNN or MTV.

Plan the management of your operation very carefully. You may want to draw up a flow chart to establish the flow of paper and responsibility for sales, traffic, billing, production, cablecasting and collections. You'll also need business forms: a sales contract, an invoice (with space to notarize that commercials were cablecast as ordered) a monthly (or weekly) ad sales report and an aged money report to help you monitor collections. To monitor inventory you can use wall charts, calendars or a computer (as the number of avails, channels, and advertisers increases).

Part of your planning should include a financial analysis with projected income and expenses. Your plan should include projected costs for production, cablecasting and insertion equipment, personnel, office supplies and overhead, promotion and marketing. Don't forget to include projected agency commissions (15%) and bad debts (1% if you qualify buyers and keep collections tight).

## Personnel

The selection of a salesperson is probably one of your most critical decisions. According to Curtis Symonds, ESPN's local advertising consultant, salesmanship has been a real problem for local cable advertising operations. He said, "you must get a good professional who knows the market and you must pay a good salary."

Someone with successful radio experience in your market is the best bet. Radio salespeople have had to be more aggressive than their television and newspaper colleagues and selling radio is similar to selling cable since it also emphasizes frequency and narrowcasting. A good local radio salesperson will have rapport with an established client list, and will get your advertising sales off to a fast start.

Good traffic and production personnel are also important. For traffic management, you'll need someone cool and collected who can sort out snarls between salespeople and provide clients with spot protection (i.e. by not running commercials for two competing auto dealers in the same commercial break).

Your local production crew is an essential component to a cable advertising operation, since they produce the bulk of commercials. It is important to find creative produc-

tion personnel who can make a "set" out of the front office fern, coax a local businessman into a Lee Iacocca type television sales performance, develop "spec" (speculative) ads that sell advertisers, and produce professional spots that can sell to audiences. In their spare time, production crew can produce sampler tapes showing locally produced ads and testimonials with advertisers praising the success of local cable advertising. Nothing will sell a reluctant local advertiser like seeing a competitor's snappy ad, and hearing that competitor praise the effectiveness of cable.

## Packaging

No amount of personnel power will overcome the error of poor packaging. Essentially you must learn to package and price your inventory the way it most benefits you to sell it for maximum profitability. First, analyze your local and satellite advertising availabilities and categorize them as AAA (the most desirable), AA or A based on program environment, known (or potential) audience, daypart, and demand. Then, develop and sell packages combining your best AAA avails with your typically undersold AA and A avails. The USA Network Local Ad Sales Handbook contains an excellent chapter on how to "harness your slower moving inventory to your prime time locomotive!"

Selling packages rather than just spots provides another benefit to you . . . and your clients. In developing the packages be sure to run the ads frequently enough to have an effect. An occasional problem with timid first time cable advertisers (and even those who should know better) is that they buy a skimpy schedule and then complain about the lack of impact. Careful packaging will avoid this disappointment.

A note about price. Don't make price an obstacle to purchasing. Keep prices reasonable while you build your client list, testimonials, and results. Once you've penetrated the market, controlled your inventory and collections, and created a value for your service, you can raise prices accordingly.

There's a trick that's rather widely used among broadcasters to package and sell the most undesirable avails. The run of schedule (R.O.S.) ads in the summer is a typically low ratings period for broadcast television. R.O.S.



ads run at the discretion of the broadcaster whenever there's a hole in the schedule. It's a bit of a gamble for the advertiser because the spots may run in prime time, or if that's sold out, in AA time, or, if that's sold out, in A time, which may very well be adjacent to the national anthem. Yet, broadcasters manage to sell R.O.S. summer packages. How? By selling them cheap and adding a little sweetener to the deal—travel.

A schedule of summer R.O.S. avails could be sold for \$4000 and include a charter travel package trip for one (value \$400-500) to Mexico, the Bahamas, Las Vegas or Europe. The advertisers can buy one or more packages depending on how good a deal you offer and how many relatives or employees they want to travel with. Then they all travel together in February or March with your top salespeople (create an incentive for them, too) for a 5 to 7 day vacation. This type of incentive travel package helps you move hard-to-sell avails, rewards your advertisers and salespeople, and gives them a chance to develop friendships outside the office environment.

Packaging will also be an important element in your development of infomercials and sponsored programming. Here are some examples of creative packaging of long form commercials by cable salespeople and leased access producers:

- a restaurant show in New York had the restaurants pay to be featured;
- a real estate show sponsored by local agents in Rock Island, Illinois presents 3 to 4 new homes each week;
- several used cars are featured each week on a show that is sponsored by Atlanta auto dealers and runs repeatedly on Saturdays from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.;
- a Baltimore department store sponsors a half-hour show, "Fashion Sense", that runs 6 times weekly;
- tuxedo rental and bridal gown stores, a caterer, baker, florist, and other wedding suppliers paid to be featured on a one hour infomercial, "Planning Your Wedding", in Griffith, Indiana.

## Prospects and Presentations

According to Ron Fischmann of the Cable Television Advertising Bureau (CAB),

there's a new assumption in the cable industry "that the bugs are worked out, technology is set, systems in place, and now we're focusing on training the local salesperson." Two valuable sessions in CAB's recent Local Advertising Sales Workshops covered subjects critical to local sales success: prospecting and presentations.

A brainstorming session on finding prospects generated the following ideas on where to look for potential cable advertisers: yellow pages, billboards, local broadcast television news, radio drive time, newspapers, the Chamber of Commerce, the Rotary Club, building permit office, and direct mail advertisers. "Auto dealers are the number one advertisers on cable," says Fischmann. "And, we're getting more and more good news about hospitals advertising on cable."

Fischmann advises cable salespeople to place their prospects on a calendar at times when they are most likely to advertise on cable and approach them well in advance of these dates. New advertisers may be most likely to try cable during seasonal promotions like "Back to School" or Christmas, around the time of their business anniversary, or during their major annual selling event.

According to Fischmann, it's important to prepare a written sales presentation based on information obtained in an interview with your potential advertiser. Put the advertiser's name and logo on the cover and be sure to include your key sales points including target audience, budget, and proposed package. Keep it short—five to ten pages billboard style—and don't forget to ask for the order.

## Promotion

A major downfall of many cable operators and local cable programmers is promotion. You must promote your program schedule, your programming, and your advertising opportunities.

If you have a local program guide, include your local programming schedule. Why spend the time and effort to produce local programs if you won't go the extra and critical mile to let people know when they're on. Also, try to get the local newspaper(s) to carry your local program listings along with satellite and premium program schedules. If they balk, try Cable Atlanta's creative solution: as part

of a joint programming arrangement, the local newspaper produces a daily news program for the local origination channel and lists their show with all other L.O. programming in the daily paper.

Next, develop a regular programming schedule with series and repeats. Promote it heavily. Except for rare occasions, it won't be worth your energy to roll out the promotional big guns for a oneshot show. Save your promotional razzle-dazzle for a series that can attract a growing audience week after week. Don't overlook the value of word-of-mouth promotion either. Ask them to tell their friends. And, whenever possible, promote local programming on satellite channels and boost viewership with tune-in ads in your local guide and newspaper listings.

Use special promotions to make your programming enticing and keep your audience tuning in. Build opportunities for viewer action and response in your programs and commercials with special events, contests, giveaways, live programming, call-ins and call-outs.

Finally, promote your commercial opportunities and be sure to promote yourself to the local business community. Like your broadcast competitors, you may want to hold an annual program preview party. It's a chance to introduce regular and potential advertisers to your program line-up, both local and satellite. Show them your staff, your studios, and your local success stories. Ask for their business with a special package deal at an irresistible price. Give them a little something with your cable system logo and phone number on it, to take home and remember you by.

The easy dollars and days of installing a satellite dish and selling that first movie channel to a customer desperate for cable are long gone. In the cable market of the future, strategy, service, and commitment will be rewarded with new revenues from your local programming department and the side benefits of community visibility and appreciation. As more cable operators are finding out, it's well worth the effort.

*Margie Nicholson works with the Chicago Access Corporation and is Chairperson of NFLCP.*



# A Creative Approach to Alpha-Numerics

by Linda Spohn

When asked to define an "alpha-numeric" service a cable subscriber might say it had something to do with numbers or a computer; a community producer might answer that it meant words printed on the screen listing his program; and a cable operator might describe it as an information channel that someone on staff types in when she has the time. Chances are that almost no one would define an alpha-numeric service as local origination programming. In fact, alpha-numeric services are frequently locally originated and probably represent the largest single category of programming available on a cable system—especially on large systems where there are many channels to fill.

Alpha-numeric services are also christened with a number of other baffling names: "automated services," "data channels," "character-generated channels," "billboards," "electronic print," "test services," "videotext or video data," or just plain "filler channels." The confusion about what they are called and who creates them leads them to be generally disregarded by almost everyone. But, given a bit of planning, creative thinking and promotion, they can carry a great deal of important community information. Alpha-numeric channels provide local merchants with low cost advertising, and can bring a significant revenue stream to the cable system. They are unquestionably the most direct line of communication between the cable operator and subscribers.

## Equipment

Regarded as the precursors to interactive videotext services which offer "information-on-command," alpha-numeric channels presently cycle information on the screen 24 hours a day or whenever full-video programming is not scheduled on a channel. This requires investment in a character generation system available from a variety of suppliers such as Video Data Systems, Texscan/MSI, or Compuvid. The system is composed of a processor, hard or soft discs to store information, terminals for input, and electronic devices to display information on-line. Terminals may be located on site or at remote locations from the processor, thus providing the opportunity for schools and governments to program their own announcements. Many

display features such as colors, letter height and width, character enhancements, and graphics are available depending upon which system is selected. However, since all but the smallest cable systems are already in possession of some kind of on-line character generation equipment, it is largely a question of learning to use what is already in place (although it is also necessary to add equipment to increase channel capacity and assign someone to program the channels).

## Program Guides

It is easy to let color bars adorn the screen on unused channels, but why not program the channels with colorful and diverse information that can impart a strong local message to subscribers. The most common automated channel is a 24 hour program guide which is usually received on-line from a satellite service. It is also possible to create a guide locally. However, gathering program schedules and changes for a large number of channels is a herculean task requiring a staff of at least two people and is usually not considered cost-effective by the cable operator. The advantages to programming the guide locally are that last minute changes can be easily inserted. With this service local programming can be completely listed and promoted.

Whether or not the cable operator provides a written guide, the on-air program guide is the most heavily watched channel, usually offering the time, date and temperature as well as listings. This fact makes it an attractive avenue for program promotion and the insertion of local advertising. Ads can be created in a full-screen page format (which periodically cycle), or crawl (a moving message at the bottom of the screen). Too many ads would disrupt the flow of listings, so it is advisable to limit the number of ads (perhaps 2-4 a day). This would give them a high frequency of exposure (several hundred times each day), and you can set these rates at the highest level. A medium-size cable system could reasonably charge \$300 a week, with a discount of \$1,000 a month for a full screen ad. Ad copy should be changed regularly because of the high display frequency. The cable operator should implement advertising on the program guide first, since it is the most visible channel, and work with

clients until their advertising works. Following this, advertising can be expanded to other channels.

## Community Bulletin Board

Due to franchise requirements, the next most common automated channel is probably the community bulletin board which will include announcements from non-profit community groups, churches, schools, and governments. This service can be an excellent public relations tool, because broadcast stations play only a fraction of the PSAs sent to them and even newspapers can't include all the letters they receive. A cable system can publish almost all notices it receives because of its continuous dedicated channel and it will take a staffmember only 4-8 hours each week to maintain. An introductory letter sent to community organizations explaining the service can assist the operator in getting the notices in the condensed form he needs. It is also a good idea to send out a follow-up letter quarterly reminding the organizations of how many notices the system has published.

## Advertising

Classified advertising is a natural medium for cable and is working well in many parts of the country, perhaps because the subscriber knows exactly what to expect when he tunes in. Subscriber or "private party" ads can be taken over the phone and usually added to the next month's cable bill. As with newspaper classifieds, the rates should be significantly lower for private party ads than for business ads. A 25 word subscriber ad might cost \$15 per week, while a business ad might cost \$50 per week. Visually the ads can be distinguished by a generic format for subscribers with a simple "Classifieds" header, and a full-page, multi-color format with a longer display time can be offered to business advertisers. Since copy changes are so simple to program, they can be made available free of charge. This copy change service make the alpha-numeric ads unique and ideal for sales and specials.

Bookkeeping for ads can be simple if the salesman fills out the original copy form completely. A contract should be typed immediately and signed by the system and the advertiser. Payment in advance eliminates the collection problems that can arise with this



new form of advertising. The copy form should then be given to the staff member in charge of design and input of the ad. At the end of the ad run, a notarized affidavit (noting any make good time) should be sent to the advertiser or agency.

Ideas for alpha-numeric channels are limited only by channel space, equipment capabilities and imagination. The concepts that will work best in a specific market can be projected by a market survey, but may ultimately be determined by experimentation. Two good questions to ask before developing a channel are: "is this information available to the subscriber from any other source which will be easier for him to use?" and "will the viewer know exactly what kind of information he will see when he tunes to the channel?" Viewership of automated channels is difficult to measure, and that is why it is essential to have a solid content core to the channel before advertising is added. A viewer will probably not intentionally tune in a channel without wanting to find out a sports score, stock quote or the time of a meeting. More than likely, he will intersect with these channels while punching through his channel line-up; if a colorful announcement catches his attention, he may watch for a minute or two. For that reason, alpha-numeric advertising needs to be a frequency medium.

All alpha-numeric channels take time to develop and catch on. They don't have a chance if there is not continual promotion from the system in the form of video spots and billstuffers. They need to be considered part of the full channel line-up by the system operator and have adequate staff to maintain them. A great deal of care needs to be devoted to finding an appropriate mix of information and advertising on a channel in order to maximize advertising sales and subscriber satisfaction.

*Linda L. Spohn is the programming coordinator for United Cable of Colorado which serves 125,000 subscribers in 15 Denver suburbs. United Cable has eleven alpha-numeric channels in a 50 channel line-up (9 of which are locally originated) and averages \$5,000 monthly in alpha-numeric advertising revenues.*

4:26 PM PROGRAM GUIDE  
TUESDAY GUIDE 4:00 PM  
20 SHO M) JAWS 3 (1983-DRAMA)  
DENNIS QUAYD, LOU GOSSETT:  
A MAN-EATING GREAT WHITE  
SHARK MENACES AN AQUATIC  
AMUSEMENT PARK!  
21 MAX M) BLUE THUNDER (C)  
22 HBO M) MY FAIR LADY (C)  
23 CNN NEWSWATCH (C)  
...DON'T MISS THE EXCITING PREMI

FREE TRUCKLOAD OF TOYS OR  
FREE COLOR TV WITH ALL NEW  
'83 & '84 VEHICLES IN STOCK  
CHERRY CREEK  
DODGE  
2727 S. HAVANA @ PARKER AURORA  
751-1104

WESTERN AIRLINES  
ARRIVALS  
FLIGHT FROM GATE TIME  
5439 SALT LAKE C-18 9:50 A  
5209 CHEYENNE C-24 10:20 A  
4829 SAN DIEGO C-24 11:45 A  
5022 CASPER C-28 11:50 A  
4222 KANSAS CITY C-18 12:37 P  
5823 LOS ANGELES C-18 12:37 P  
5609 RENO O-20 12:50 P  
464 BOSTON O-3 1:13 P  
418 BILLINGS C-28 1:26 P  
5077 RAPID CITY C-22 1:52 P  
513 SANTA FE O-28 2:12 P  
YOU CAN COUNT ON US  
FOR RESERVATIONS CALL 398-3488

THE SKI CHANNEL  
ARAPAHOE BASIN  
BASE: 85' / NEW: 1'  
CONDITION: P/PP  
ADULT FULL DAY: \$12  
CHILD FULL DAY: \$5  
...FOR WEATHER CONDITIONS AND RO

HOME SPORTS LINE  
NAT'L STANDINGS  
MAJOR LEAGUE BASEBALL STANDINGS  
NATIONAL / EAST W L GB  
NEW YORK 41 33 0  
CHICAGO 43 35 0  
PHILADELPHIA 43 35 0  
MONTREAL 38 39 4 1/2  
ST. LOUIS 38 41 5 1/2  
PITTSBURGH 30 48 13  
...GREYHOUND RACING RESULTS WILL

AURORA  
MALL  
I-25 & ALAMERA

BREAKFAST SPECIAL  
HAM, BACON OR SAUSAGE, 2 EGGS  
POTATOES, TOAST & COFFEE  
\$2.78  
DUTCHMAN'S RESTAURANT-OPEN 8 AM  
BROOMFIELD SHOPPING CENTER

FLORAL 'N HEARTY  
Wide variety of plants  
every third Saturday  
PLANT SALE  
1925 S. ROSEMARY  
696-0519

Alpha numerics displayed on United Cable of Colorado's local channels.



# THE COMMUNITY VIDEOT: A Resource of Technical Tips

## Establishing A Commercial Insertion System

by Dave Bloch

As cable systems struggle with increasing competition from videocassettes, MMDS and other media, more and more cable operators are turning to sales of local advertising on satellite services (MTV, CNN, ESPN and USA network is a common combination) to make financial ends meet. In smaller systems, the system manager often turns to the community programming department for information on equipment and production requirements.

In this installment of "Community Videot" you will be introduced to some basic terminology of commercial insertion systems, as well as the costs, capabilities and limitations of various types of systems. This column will not make you an advertising expert, but it should give you the basic information you need to ask equipment vendors when you go shopping for a system.

Note that the costs provided below are rough estimates. It is very likely that vendors' actual bid prices will be considerably lower, especially in systems owned by large MSOs involved in massive purchases. Also, the costs assume you already own a 3/4-inch editing system, which you will need to put together your insertion master tapes.

First, some basic terminology:

**Spot:** A commercial. Although spot lengths vary from 10 to 60 seconds, you can make your life much easier by standardizing your system with 30 second spots only.

**Insertion:** The act of placing a local commercial onto a cable channel, pre-empting the programming being provided by the satellite service (which is usually an "800-Number," direct-response advertisement).

**Avail Time:** The periods of time, usually 30, 60, 90, or 120 seconds, which are made available by most basic cable satellite services for system sales.

**Cue Tone:** Every satellite service providing avail time sends a coded audio signal 5 seconds before the avail begins. Automated insertion equipment senses these cue tones and starts the commercial insertion sequence you have programmed into it. These tones are not standardized between different satellite channels, and your equipment must be customized to decode the tones of the specific channels you want to use.

**Run of Schedule:** This is a method of selling commercial time to an advertiser which says, simply, that their commercial will come up in order at various times throughout the day. This is in contrast to "Specific Time" sales, which guarantee to the advertiser that, for example, his/her ad will be cablecast at 5:58 p.m.

There are four general categories of commercial insertion equipment: multiple-spot automation, sequential automation, random access automation, multiple VCR random access automation.

### Multiple-Spot Automation

This is the least expensive, least flexible, and most common insertion method presently found on cable systems. All the commercials for the day are recorded, in order, on one master tape. The spots must be grouped so they will fit the avail times (e.g., if the first "avail" is 90 seconds long and the second avail is 120 seconds, then the master tape would have a group of three 30-second spots, a break, and then a group of four 30-second spots). When the insertion equipment receives the cue tone from the satellite it simply starts the VCR, plays it until the group of spots are complete, and switches back to the satellite.

The advantage of this system is its low cost—about \$4,500 for the first channel and about \$3,000 for additional channels—because only one VCR per channel is needed. The primary disadvantage is the amount of time and effort needed to prepare the master tapes. The programmer must be careful to assemble the spots in the proper groupings as described above, and will have to prepare a new master tape every time a spot is added or removed. The editing process is made much more difficult if spots are sold for specific times, or if spots of different lengths are used. Still, the multiple-spot system is very cost-effective and if spots are sold on a monthly basis (or longer), tape editing can be minimized.

### Sequential Automation

This system uses four VCRs per channel, each loaded with a different commercial. When the cue tone is received from the satellite, the insertion equipment starts the first VCR. Five seconds before the end of the commercial, the equipment sends a "Start" signal

to the second VCR, and then cuts to that VCR at the beginning of the spot. This sequence repeats until the avail time is over.

Sequential systems are fairly expensive because of the four VCRs you need for each channel. The first channel would cost approximately \$12,000. Because you put only one commercial on each tape, your tape costs will be high. Also, the tapes must be loaded and changed manually. The advantage of this type of system is the ease of programming. There are no multiple-spot master tapes to put together and no computer to program. The system handles a mixture of avail time lengths and spot lengths easily.

### Random Access Automation

The random access system adds a computer to the multiple-spot arrangement, to enable any group of spots to be played at any time. This greatly reduces editing time, especially when programming a satellite channel with variable-length avails (60 seconds at 1:59, 90 seconds at 2:28, and so on). To use this example, you would program the insertion computer to play one of the 60-second groups at 1:59, and then a 90-second group at 2:28.

Because of the microcomputer and control system required, the first channel of a random access system is expensive—approximately \$14,000. However, because only one VCR is needed for each channel, expanding the system costs only about \$4,000 per channel. For a cable system wishing to sell specific-time advertising to a fairly large number of advertisers, the additional investment for random access can be cost-effective.

An additional advantage of this type of system is the ease and relatively low cost (around \$1,500) of adding computer-controlled logging and verification that spots paid for have actually run. The computer will continuously print out this information, which can then be used by the billing department and prove to skeptical clients that their spots were cablecast as expected.

### Multiple VCR Random Access Automation

Cable systems which intend to go heavily into commercial insertion, and which have the necessary capital to purchase an advanced



system, will find a multi-random access system to be valuable in the long run. Tape preparation time is kept to a minimum, since the editor simply records all the spots for a particular channel back-to-back (with an identifying code at the start of each one) on the master tape. New spots are easily inserted over obsolete ones, with a new identifying code. Different length commercials may be mixed in any order.

When the master is complete, four copies are made and loaded in the four VCRs that feed that channel. The computer is programmed with the codes for each spot to be played during each avail period. Prior to an avail, the computer will cue each VCR to the start of one of the group of commercials to be run. When the cue tone is received from the satellite, the computer will then run the machines in order and automatically switch

between them. When the avail period is over, the computer switches back to the satellite service, prints out a verification of the played commercials, and cues the VCRs to the next spots.

A single-channel, multiple VCR random access system costs \$25,000 to \$30,000. Each additional channel would run \$15,000 to \$20,000.

### Making The Decision

In deciding on the type of commercial insertion equipment that will best serve the needs of your cable system, be sure to analyze your present staffing levels, availability of editing equipment, and available space to house the insertion system (a four-channel, multiple VCR random access system will fill three standing equipment racks). Make reasonable projections of the amount of

revenue your commercial insertion efforts can be expected to generate, and balance these against the equipment purchase and operating costs.

When you begin to select a manufacturer, get reports from other cable systems about the reliability of their automation equipment. Inquire about the length of time the manufacturer has been in the business because like other high-tech industries, this one has seen a large number of short-lived companies.

Examine the equipment at trade shows, if you can, and try out the programming equipment to see if it is easy to understand and operate.

**Good luck!**

*Dave Bloch is manager of local programming for the Davis Community Cable Cooperative in Davis, California.*

# The AD Channel

"A Picture Is Worth A Thousand Words"™

Innovative Programming  
To Enhance The  
Local Cable Package

Austin CableVision  
(512) 339-0084



# Local Origination in Portland: A Lesson To Be Learned

by Adam Haas

The city of Portland, Oregon began exploring the potential of cable television in the early 1970s. At that time, westside residents were served by a reception only cable system, while the eastside of Portland was not yet wired. The city hired a consultant to determine what services and capabilities they should expect from a cable operator for the eastside.

The consultants report in 1975 called for a state-of-the-art cable system with extensive capability for institutional use and community programming. Based on the study's recommendation, a request for proposals (RFP) was formulated and cable companies were invited to bid on the franchise. Although a few bids were submitted, they were all ultimately rejected.

In the city's view, the cable industry of the 1970s had not yet become sufficiently advanced to warrant granting a franchise. The franchising process came to a halt.

In the late 1970s, as the nationwide cable franchising wars began to heat up, Portland realized the cable industry made many new advances. In 1979, a citizen's cable task force was formed and another consultant was hired. A new RFP was issued in February of 1980. It included requirements for an institutional network, two-way services, and placed a particular emphasis on community programming. All applicants were asked to completely describe their plans for local origination, including channels, budget, staffing, and hours of programming.

By April 1980, the City of Portland received more than five franchise applications, including one from Rogers Cablesystems. The Rogers proposal contained a particularly innovative local origination commitment. After consulting with a number of community organizations, Rogers agreed to program 9 L.O. channels with each channel devoted to one theme: arts programming, health programming, sports, black programming, environmental programming, programming for the hearing impaired, programming on the local government, and an L.O. showcase.

The franchise was awarded to Rogers Cablesystems in May of 1981. Staff hirings for L.O. began during July of the same year, and their first task was the procurement and installation of production facilities.

The \$300,000 L.O. studio includes a Grass Valley switcher, a film chain, an extensive lighting package, a time base corrector, three studio cameras, and other hardware. The control room was designed with convenience in mind. Video and audio outputs from all equipment are patchable through patch panels. Film chain and VTR remote controls are placed by the technical director position. An intercom system runs throughout the facility including positions at the lighting board, edit board and video center. A teleprompter system, unheard of in any other Rogers' system, was installed in the studio to facilitate smooth opens and closes. In addition to the studio, a \$200,000 three-camera remote truck was designed by Lerro Electrical Corporation and delivered to Rogers in late May of 1982. To facilitate playback, a video center was designed with individual semi-automated playback racks for each L.O. theme channel.

In selecting and designing the L.O. facilities, a great deal of emphasis was placed on the quality and versatility of equipment. Equipment purchasing decisions were guided by the notion that without a high quality facility, high quality programming is difficult to achieve.

There was also a great deal of care put into hiring staff for L.O. Over the course of two years, a total of 29 people were hired in the programming department, including coordinators for the theme channels, a production supervisor, five production crew, operations and playback personnel and video engineering support staff. Individuals were sought with just the right mix of production knowledge and community activism. For example, the person who filled the arts channel coordinator position has a degree in art, a background in film and television, and knows the local arts community.

## Programming

In the first year of operation, Rogers' L.O. staff developed numerous innovative series programs. For example, an in-depth round table public affairs program, *Your Government—A Closer Look*, was launched, and while it was often shot in the studio, the program also went on location. For example, one installment, focusing on solid waste disposal, had guests and host seated at a round

table in the middle of a Portland garbage dump. Another series, *Reaching Out*, served as the first all-location produced series. It highlighted community self-help movements in Portland such as New Beginnings, a volunteer program for female ex-offenders, and Portland's Neighborwatch crime-prevention program. *Get Movin' with Kids* also debuted and featured teen and pre-teen hosts with young studio audiences. *Artscene*, an on-location series highlighting current performances of local arts groups, kept viewers informed of current art happenings in Portland. *NorthEast Spectrum* also premiered that year offering the Black community of NE Portland a chance to view cultural and community affairs programming designed specifically for their interests.

As the work of L.O. staff began to accelerate, more community groups were given exposure through L.O. programming. The many letters of appreciation, which soon arrived at Rogers, impressed the management and helped document L.O.'s impact on the community. In addition to letters, the local press began taking note of L.O.'s impact, and complimentary articles appeared on the in-depth, thoughtful local coverage provided by Rogers' L.O.



Ken Butler plays his ax on *Video Verite*, a series on the L.O. arts channel in Portland.



But the best measure of success came in the form of national awards. Rogers submitted numerous entries to the NFLCP's "Hometown USA" awards competition in 1983 and walked away with three nominations and one "Hometown" award for the series *Get Movin' with Kids*.

This was the prelude to the NCTA ACE awards. Much of the programming produced during the first year of operation was submitted to ACE. As a result, Rogers of Portland received 7 nominations, and three ACE awards were presented to Rogers at the ceremony in Los Angeles. The documentary series *Reaching Out* won an ACE, as well as the childrens' series *Get Movin' with Kids*. The third ACE award that Rogers of Portland received was for "Overall Commitment to Local Programming", the most prestigious ACE award. Suddenly this infant L.O. operation was thrust into the national limelight.

## Developing An Audience

Although the accolades were a big morale boost to staff, they provided but one measure of success. During the second year of the operation, a new "big picture" session revealed another area of focus requiring increased effort: audience development. While L.O. can be a valuable public relations tool for a company by conveying goodwill to the community or receiving national recognition, the very heart of the cable industry is the subscriber. Satisfying customers' programming desires is of paramount concern if a cable system is to succeed. This focus is not only necessary for traditional satellite services, but for L.O. as well. A successful L.O. operation must take seriously its subscribers' programming preferences and search out a niche which is not addressed by other services.

Rogers' L.O. staff took a two-prong approach to this challenge:

1. Increase viewership through better promotion and wider exposure of programming.
2. Produce programming which you know is popular among subscribers.

Numerous Ideas and initiatives were developed to address the first area—promotion. One of the biggest drawbacks of programming so many channels—the fragmentation of the audience and dilution of promotional

efforts—provided the greatest challenge.

To help address this problem we enlisted a student from a local university to become the department's publicist. Her efforts brought more thorough coverage of our programming in local media.

We also developed 30 and 60 second promos on specific programs. These ran on theme channels and local satellite avails. In addition, we put together an animated I.D. to be placed at the head of all L.O. programs.

Another tool we used was a studio audience format. *Portland Tonight*, was taped with a live audience, and all members of the audience were encouraged to go home and watch the program that night.

Finally, an interconnect of the PCTV channel with Liberty Cable on the westside of Portland was established. This added 40,000 more subscribers to the potential audience.

In addressing, programming popularity, Rogers' staff began giving greater attention to the production of well-viewed series. As a result the following programs were developed:

- *PDX Sportsline*, Portland's only weekly call-in program featuring local sports personalities, quickly proved its success with constantly jammed phone lines.
- *The Portland Tonight* show developed out of a recognized need for more entertainment-oriented programming on the L.O. channels. It featured a live band and was hosted by one of Portland's foremost comedians.
- Portland is a city of hockey fans. Capitalizing on this, the sports coordinator started televising the Portland Winter Hawks games. Immediately, the positive subscriber mail came pouring in to Rogers.
- A cooking program was shot on location in a local gourmet kitchen product store. Rogers received many letters requesting recipes offered by mail, demonstrating the show's popularity.
- An aerobics pilot, shot outside on a tennis court, generated numerous positive letters from subscribers who responded to a C.G. page at the end of the pilot requesting viewer input.

## The Financial Crunch

However, as Rogers L.O. continued into its second year, it became clear that the theme channel concept was not working as well as Rogers had hoped. To begin with, Rogers had chosen the approach of producing quality programs rather than quantity. This resulted in theme channels with a high repeat level and/or inordinant amounts of character generated messages. In other cases, the pre-emption of satellite services by local theme programming (which shared the same channel) often perturbed subscribers and caused complaints. And as mentioned earlier, effective promotion across 9 theme channels was impractical.

In the Spring of 1984, a proposal was put before the Portland Cable regulatory commission to consolidate its theme channels into three staff-produced channels: a government channel, the Black Channel, and Portland City Television (PCTV). The request was granted in September, 1984. PCTV now serves as the showcase L.O. channel and carries the sports, arts, health and hearing impaired programming which previously appeared on separate channels.

The financial health of Rogers Cablesystems in Portland was in jeopardy. Rogers of Portland is a prime example of a new urban build whose financial projections were simply not in line with current market conditions. In meeting Portland's high expectations for cable service (expectations growing since the early 70s), Rogers Cablesystems built a cable network which cost \$15 million more to construct than expected with some 20,000 fewer installations than projected.

## Meeting The Challenge

Towards the end of Spring 1984, Rogers' L.O. staff began hearing more about the serious financial condition of the local company. Community programming has always been vulnerable to cuts by cable operators because such programming is seen as a non-essential service. Although Rogers L.O. had gained local and national recognition, its future was clearly in jeopardy. In anticipation of possible budget cuts and in an effort to preserve the future of Portland's local origination, Rogers' local L.O. staff decided to take action. For a company whose financial well-being is at stake, the most significant contribu-



tion possible is to the bottom line.

Rogers' L.O. proposed a three-month revenue generation experiment. As mentioned earlier, one goal of L.O. was to keep commercialism from influencing its content. However, the staff's new thrust towards more popularized programming adopted earlier in the year put it in a good position to find sponsors for existing programs. Furthermore, the city-wide interconnected PCTV channel had a respectable viewing universe. The revenue generation project beginning in June 1984 outlined four areas of focus:

1. Sponsorships: Sponsors were solicited for all L.O. series. Producers, working through Rogers Ad Sales Department, helped line up new sponsors. Almost all leads were generated through L.O. staff contacts and solicitations.

2. Paid Production: One producer was assigned to coordinate requests from outside organizations to produce paid video projects not for use on the cable system.

3. Ad Production: Another producer was designated to script, shoot and edit spots for clients of ad sales and L.O. sponsors.

4. Facility Rental: The Production Supervisor was designated to oversee the paid use of facilities by outside producers.

The project's target was to raise \$31,000 in a three-month period. The goal was to establish a track record in revenue generation which quantified a revenue potential and established a clear trend for growth.

After an immense amount of work on the part of L.O. staff, September 1984 arrived, making the generation of more than \$35,000

in receivables in just three months, 11% beyond target. Given the fact that revenue generation had not been a goal prior to June, the success was truly astounding. Here is a revenue break-out by category and percent of total.

<u>Sponsorships</u>	\$21,120.00; 60% of Total
<u>Paid Productions</u>	\$ 9,937.00; 28% of Total
<u>Ad Productions</u>	\$ 1,820.00; 5% of Total
<u>Facility Rental</u>	\$ 1,005.00; 3% of Total
<u>Miscellaneous</u>	\$ 1,403.00; 4% of Total

In addition to exceeding revenue goals, the project proved that community programming could not only win awards but was also commercially viable. In fact, that September Rogers received more ACE awards, two for local arts and one for Overall Commitment to a Special Audience for Black Community TV.

### The Cut-Backs

Although the L.O. department proved it could raise a minimum of \$140,000 over the next year, it was a matter of being "too little, too late." Unless L.O. could offset all of its expenses through revenue earned, the department continued to be a drain on resources. When a cable operator is in financial duress the good community will, national acclaim

and subscriber loyalty (which L.O. can generate)—takes a back seat to cost cutting. There is no question that in healthier times, Rogers Cablesystems would have enthusiastically continued its financial support of L.O.

However, with the company looking for any opportunity available to ease its \$100,000 a week negative cash flow, cutting the L.O. budget was seen as a necessary evil.

As a result, the Portland City Council has granted Rogers a 6 year \$8.4 million deferral of payments to community programming. In the interim the city will contribute \$188,000 a year to L.O.'s annual budget (Rogers will reimburse the city at the end of 6 years.)

In addition, the L.O. budget was cut from approximately \$750,000 in the 1983-84 fiscal year to \$342,859 in the 1984-85 fiscal year. The major consequence was the gradual reduction in the programming staff from the equivalent of 29 full-time positions to 13.

### What the Future Holds

There are some encouraging signs for the future despite such a major setback to the Rogers L.O. operation.

First, although resources have been cut by more than half, so too have the number of theme channels to program. With three consolidated theme channels, promotion should be easier resulting in increased channel identity. Second, with a citywide PCTV interconnect in place, the signal now reaches nearly 100,000 cable homes.

Furthermore, the momentum from revenue generation begun last summer seems unstoppable. It looks like a number of series will continue to enjoy sponsorship support. Even syndication of L.O. series is now within reach; one satellite program supplier is currently negotiating licensing fees with Rogers to acquire four hours of outdoor entertainment shot for the Summer Magic series.

Also, the L.O. department is proving its worth to the rest of the company through ancillary projects, such as spot production for the ad sales department and the production of subscriber retention programs to help subscribers make better use of their cable service.

The most discouraging element of the cut-backs is losing many of the staff who have made Rogers of Portland's L.O. operation so successful. It's people who make any organization excel, and Rogers L.O. will suffer from the loss.



NE Spectrum is a public affairs program serving the Black community in Portland.

Adam Haas is regional director of programming for Rogers Cablesystems of Portland where he was initially responsible for development of their local origination department.



# JIMMY REA

**Understands Your Mobile Unit Needs for That New Franchise.**

High Quality Production, Large Impressive Appearance, Price!

Our Solution: 1 Chevrolet 14' Cube Van Including:



- Delivery in 30 days.

Sony and Panasonic production packages installed in our high cube unit complete:

**\$49,900.00**

## WE ALSO CUSTOM BUILD!!!

All You Provide is:

- Description of your individual needs
- Budget limitation

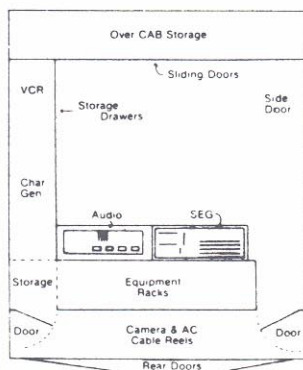
We Provide Internally:

- Technical work and engineering
- Carpentry and materials
- Complete installation consisting of high quality custom construction, satisfying all your personal needs.

Having built trucks for many needs, we can provide a tremendous amount of information on mobile production studio design, construction and maintenance.

All of our truck quotations include delivery with full instructions to operating personnel.

Representing over 300 lines of video hardware, we are available to discuss substitutions to our recommendations in every area from cameras to truck chassis.



**Our sales representatives will be very happy to call on your office with complete blueprints of the trucks described in our offer. Your individual needs can then be fully discussed and if changes are required, pricing affected by those requirements can be completely discussed.**

Call or Write for our Free Truck Information Package:

# JIMMY REA

540 West Broad Street  
Columbus, Ohio 43215  
(614) 221-5170



# Leased Access Flourishes in Athens

by Chuck Searcy

When the FCC announced early in 1981 that it would begin licensing low power television stations, the *Athens Observer* in Athens, Georgia had just entered its ninth year as a weekly newspaper. The *Observer* had carved out a niche in a very competitive media market (two daily newspapers, a student newspaper on the University of Georgia campus, a black-oriented weekly, a campus radio station, and five commercial radio stations) by offering a lively, independent source of news and opinion, comprehensive coverage of the local arts and entertainment scene, and the best classified advertising section around.

Surprisingly, even in a community of 70,000, there was no commercial television station in Athens. The university station, which was part of the state educational network, offered little or no local programming.

My partners at the *Observer* and I saw an opportunity to use the reputation and goodwill of the paper, our staff resources, and our advertising base to expand our market reach through low power television.

By the time our engineering work was completed and an LPTV application was ready, however, the FCC had imposed a freeze on all further applications. Even if our application had been filed before the freeze, FCC staffers told us it could take from two to five years before our license might be granted.

So we turned to cable. We approached the Athens area manager of the Liberty Cable system, Bob Denson, and he arranged a meeting with the national vice president of the company, M.M. Victory from Birmingham.

We told them of our plans for local television and suggested that we negotiate use of a cable channel for the service as an alternative to LPTV. The response was immediate and direct: no. Victory pointed out that each channel on the system represented a significant financial investment, and his company was not about to turn over a channel to anyone unless there were clear benefits to the company. It was strictly business.

That was the beginning of our education about the cable industry, and we have learned a lot since. By the end of that first meeting, the cable company had agreed to meet with us once more for a detailed presentation of

our proposal, but it was obvious that we were going to have to be very persuasive.

A week later, we met again with Bob Denson and M.M. Victory, along with several other regional and corporate staff people. We explained that our concept for Observer Television was based on the need for local information as a complement to the existing array of network and satellite program services available. In exchange for our use of one channel on the cable system, Liberty Cable would reap several benefits:

1. Increased goodwill in the community as the "provider" of local television service.
2. An outlet for "public access" requests.
3. An outlet for cable advertising and promotional campaigns to sell additional cable services.
4. Revenues from the channel lease.
5. The above benefits at little or not cost to the cable company.

Observer Television would buy all equipment, provide staff and studio facilities, provide local programming, handle advertising sales, and be completely accountable and responsible for all aspects of local television operations, leaving the cable company free to do what it could do best: maintain and improve the technical capabilities of the system to provide more and better services to its customers, thereby expanding its customer base and increasing revenues and profits.

The contrast between the first and second meetings was striking. The company officials listened carefully. They seemed to like the proposal. They appeared to like the challenge and the innovative nature of the venture. We began work on a draft agreement immediately, and within a few weeks, a contract was signed.

We have since had an excellent business relationship with the company, even through a transfer of ownership from Liberty to Telecommunications, Inc. in the fall of 1983. Bob Denson, who has remained as manager of the local system, has been more than cooperative; he has taken a personal interest in the success of Observer Television and has been generous with advice and technical assistance when the need arose. The regional manager for TCI, Danny Bryan, has honored all agreements and informal working arrangements we had with

Liberty, and his interest and support have been encouraging. In short, we have developed a cordial, mutually beneficial business relationship with the cable company.

Based on our experience with Liberty/TCI, it seems evident that local programmers could have a much more constructive relationship with cable companies if they keep in mind two simple guidelines:

1. Cable operators are in business to make a profit. They are interested in community service when it makes good business sense. Despite public perceptions to the contrary, cable companies are not public utilities and, with few exceptions, they are not "controlled" by municipal governments. They are tired of having demands placed upon them by governments, special interest groups, and individuals for public access channels, special program services, use of video equipment, studios, and staff, when such demands are unjustified economically or when their costs would be prohibitive.

2. A commitment to local origination should be a serious one. Such a venture should be backed up with adequate financing from private or public sources, a plan for commercial viability (or continued funding from public sector or other sources), and experience—if possible. In the case of Liberty and TCI, and I suspect this is true of most cable companies, they negotiated seriously and fairly with us once they realized that we were responsible, had a track record, were willing to risk the investment in staff, equipment, and facilities. No cable company is interested in allocating channel space to a programmer who has no staying power and who has nothing to lose if the venture goes belly up.

Observer Television began operations in April, 1983, using only a character generator. Throughout the summer, as cameras, VCRs, lights and other equipment began to arrive, and as we renovated the former bookstore which would become our studio and production facility, we experimented with several different local origination formats.

We carried three local newscasts in the morning, a live one-hour "Lunchbreak" news/magazine program at noon, and another hour of live programming called "Around Athens" from 7:00 to 8:00 p.m. every weekday.



It was not until the fall of 1983, however, that we began to make our mark as a local television station. By that time most of our equipment was in place, and we had a good crew of production and program people—three fulltime and a half dozen parttime volunteers and interns from the University of Georgia. We then entered into an agreement with the local school system to carry televised replays of all home and away high school football games. The football games vividly demonstrated to our audience and our advertisers the impact of local television.

For football shoots, production manager Doug Congleton had virtually the entire studio and control room packed up and loaded into the van—two cameras, a portable SEG, two VTRs, mike mixer, TBC, wave form monitor, three color monitors, and triple B&W monitors. Our announcers were local radio professionals John Breffle, who soon became our sales manager, along with Dan Brenna, Danny Daniels, and Michael Blakeley. To produce both high school games on the same night, we hired Aguar Video Vision Productions, a local production company started by brothers Rick and Dave Aguar a few months before we went into business.

The football games were sold out in a matter of days. Major sponsors for the season were Coca-Cola, Parrish Toyota, First National Bank, and Arby's.

This season we have added a third camera on the field and instant replay, with the capability to do isolation replays.

Something occurred that fall that significantly affected our programming.

We had asked the cable company to move Observer Television from channel 17, which required a converter, to a primary band channel to give us access to a wider audience. They agreed to do so and moved us to channel 13, bumping the USA Network to channel 17.

There were immediate complaints from USA Network fans. They objected to the replacement of nighttime sports programming with character generated "community bulletin board" information. Always sensitive to complaints, the cable company officials concluded that they had made a mistake in switching channels and decided to move Observer Television back to channel 17. By that time, however, we had begun carrying high school football, which was very popular. The cable

company realized that more complaints would come in if they made yet another change.

Under the circumstances, they came up with a solution which satisfied everyone, and which took the pressure off us to develop more local programming faster than we were able. They asked us, and we agreed, to carry the USA Network as a duplicate service on channel 13 as well as 17, breaking away only for local programming. The result, since then, has been a format anchored by USA, augmented by an increasing fare of local programming. Now, we are making plans to change our format completely and greatly expand our local programming.

In the meantime, we offer a half-hour "Around Athens" each weekday evening, which includes local news, sports, weather, a humorous commentary, an arts calendar, an economic report, a street poll of local citizens, and two or three edited local feature stories. In addition, each weekday evening we offer a different half-hour locally produced program to cover a variety of audiences and interests. Monday evening it's "Country Roads," a country music video program; Tuesday it's "Spotlight," featuring local music, drama, art, and cultural affairs; Wednesday it's "The Larry Munson Show," a sports interview and call-in show featuring the announcer for the Georgia Bulldogs; Thursday night my partner Pete McCommons, publisher of the paper, and prominent local banker Bucky Redwine host a community affairs discussion program; Friday night it's "Sight on Sound," a rock music video show with interviews of local musicians and club owners, featuring original Athens music. Sunday mornings we carry a taped worship service from the Central Baptist Church.

Seasonal programs include coaches' shows, and UGA men's and women's basketball.

We regularly use taped features produced by students at the University of Georgia under the guidance of instructor Al Wise and Bill Martin. The quality ranges from fair to excellent, and the students benefit from the experience and the exposure.

In addition, we have produced a number of other special programs, including live coverage of a major bicycle race in downtown Athens; the celebrity tennis match at the NCAA championships; an alumni football

game; live music from a downtown nightclub; city league softball games; a celebrity "roast" to raise scholarship funds; and a presentation by a local experimental theater group.

When the local school superintendent announced the elimination of several vocational courses and teacher positions on a Friday, with the school board expected to approve the proposal Monday evening, irate parents and teachers called us and asked if we could do something. We agreed to a televised community forum that same night, and for over an hour a panel of parents, teachers, students, and education specialists discussed the issue as our audience participated with live telephone call-ins. At the Monday meeting, the superintendent and the school board tabled the matter for further study.

Our program manager, Wilson Hawthorne, produced a half-hour documentary on the controversial re-start of the nuclear reactor at the Savannah River Plant. We also examined every local political race in a series of live "meet the candidate" forums sponsored by the Jaycees.

During recent local elections, we provided live studio coverage and analysis of the results as they became available. Since we don't have live remote capability, we stationed two reporters at the county courthouse with a camera operator and portable VCR. They interviewed election officials, candidates, and courthouse observers, reporting the vote tallies as they came in. As each brief segment was completed, the tape was rushed to the studio, three blocks away, by interns riding bicycles. Our viewers saw the reports within six to eight minutes after they were taped—the next best thing to live remote.

During the past year, we have interviewed or featured scores of local people and visitors to Athens, including Dean Rusk, R.E.M., Gloria Steinem, filmmaker Jim Herbert, Joan Mondale, Gary Hart, and Maryknoll nuns.

Future plans call for a gourmet cooking show, a children's program to be shot in classrooms, and a teenage dance party.

Advertising revenue is what keeps Observer Television going. Our sales during the first year were less than projected, but we are closer to the target now and this fall promises to be very good. Our rates are extremely affordable; we are competing in a market



Our plans now are to improve the quality of what we are currently producing, add some new programming, and concentrate on marketing and promoting the station and boosting our advertising sales. We are considering the purchase of a top-quality character generator to enhance the look of our production, and we are examining the feasibility of a mobile microwave van to allow us to do live remotes.

where television has never been offered before, so our prices are competitive with local radio. Thirty-second spots range from as low as \$8.00 to \$20.00 depending upon volume and frequency. Production costs for a 30-second spot generally run from \$125 to \$300, but as an introductory incentive to new advertisers, anyone who signs a 13-week contract gets a flat rate of \$50. That single factor has persuaded a reluctant first-time advertiser to try television.

We handle the ad-avails on CNN, USA, MTV, and ESPN, and advertisers have had remarkable response from their commercials—enough that most have renewed their contracts. Rarely can an advertiser tie customer response directly to an advertising medium, but that has happened with local television. People stop in, they say they saw an ad on television, and they buy.

All this costs money, of course, and the question we have to ask at every step is: where is the return on this investment? Will it pay for itself in increased revenues, lower costs, or greater efficiencies and effectiveness in our operation?

We have made mistakes, and we will probably make more. Our most critical error so far has been our underestimation of the costs in equipment and overhead for the first year of operation. This, we have had to infuse additional capital earlier than we had anticipated.

However, based on our first year in the business of local origination television, we think it is an exciting way to serve the community, to generate interest in what is going on in the community, and to help people know each other better. At the same time, it is an attractive, cost-effective advertising medium for local businesses. We are convinced that there is money to be made in providing this service, if there is a long-term commitment and a willingness to take the risks associated with a venture of unproven potential.

*Chuck Searcy is president and general manager of Observer Cable Television.*



*Observer TV coverage of University of Georgia basketball.*



633 South Federal Boulevard  
Denver, Colorado 80219

**1-800-525-9571**

**1-303-922-5564**

●  
*Call us for friendly  
pricing on systems  
or on components.*

●  
**WE  
PROUDLY  
REPRESENT:**

**SONY®**

**3M**

**Panasonic**

**JVC**



# Leased Access Cadillac Style

by Charlene A. Gierkey

*When Gary Knapp decided he wanted to operate a leased access channel in Cadillac, Michigan (population 12,000), he received little encouragement because the feasibility of such an effort runs contrary to conventional wisdom.*

*However, by the time this story is printed, Knapp will be in operation 24 hours a day with 50 hours of original programming per week. With 14 employees, three of them full-time, he runs a very successful operation with paid advertising. Occupying 5,500 square feet on the bottom floor of his Victorian home. Knapp offers more local programming than the three network affiliate stations in his area combined.*

*Knapp, married with two children, works 17 hours a day to keep TV 3 moving in the right direction. His wife, Connie, is book-keeper, office manager and receptionist. The following is from an interview in October 1984.*

**Q:** What kind of programming do you offer?

**A:** We create all of our own programming. That's the reason why we're so popular. Most stations and systems run local programming as fill, but TV 3 local programming is our prime source. We get people that say, "I can't believe what you're doing here." In big cities cable stations get grants and volunteers, but they are amazed it can be profitable. We have a cooking show; a radio programming billboard with a well-liked, well-known personality in our area who draws a following; a shopping guide where we tour area businesses; a kid's show where we go into schools and interview kids; local city meetings; play-by-play sports events; and a show called "Roundtable," a talk show which is very popular. It's local and personable. And we have the community behind us.

**Q:** Do you rerun your programming a lot?

**A:** We do reruns. My philosophy is to put programming on and give people a chance to see it at their convenience. Our programs are repeated the same day only. This community is a big factory town, with a lot of work shifts, and we're really trying to make it convenient. When you

stop to think about it, how convenient is TV today. Not very. We'll run a show like "Roundtable" at 1 p.m. and then again the same day at 8 p.m. It's been very effective.

**Q:** Is selling spots locally hard for you?

**A:** You might say it's our biggest problem, but it is not insurmountable. With a new advertiser their first question is, Well, how many people watch?" So I get them into the studio to see the operation and put them on TV. People in the community then say they saw them on TV and they are amazed that "everyone saw me!" After that, they have more confidence in what we're doing. I've been in ad sales a long time and it takes someone who knows how to sell.

**Q:** How did you get started?

**A:** We worked five months to get on the air. It took \$40,000—my own money and borrowed money from the bank. All of our equipment was either new or leased. But it takes more than money. You can't get into it and be big—have a bunch of employees and big equipment. You've got to start small and work your way up. When I began there was only me. I was in radio 15 years and have a broad background in broadcasting. For the first three months of TV 3, the cable people had us wired wrong and we were receiving State Police signals on our channel. That kept me from being able to do a lot. Then a new company bought that cable company and we were rewired overnight. But it cost us three months.

**Q:** What about spots. What do you charge?

**A:** The highest rate on our card is \$12.50. Our flight rates range from \$5 to \$9 a spot. We're delivering radio and video for the price of radio. I have to have low rates. That's a must or they won't buy, especially when you're new.

**Q:** How can you make it with those rates?

**A:** The quality of our ads. We urge advertisers to do their own—be in them. Our color is top-notch right now. The community is behind us because we give them

what they want. Right now keeping up with equipment is a concern to keep our quality up. Last year I paid \$4,500 for a character generator and now I can get one for \$3,000 that can do twice as much as mine.

**Q:** What are your future plans?

**A:** Right now TV 3 covers five to seven miles in the city. The biggest complaint I get is from the rural areas who can't get us. That's a nice complaint. We've applied for an independent channel that will take us 30-50 miles and we hope to have that sometime in the next three years. All we really need is a transmitter and a tower.

**Q:** You're going on 24 hours a day?

**A:** Yes. From midnight until 8 a.m. we'll have character generated billboard ads. At 8 a.m. our morning disc jockey does his thing—two hours live in the production studio with his own show until 10 a.m.

**Q:** What is some advice you'd give to others who want to do the same thing you're doing?

**A:** You've got to live and breathe the business. You can't just get the money and go. You have to build a relationship with the community. They have to trust you. I was with these local merchants a number of years when I was in radio. Now I work 17 hours a day. You've got to keep committed. You have to have a broadcast background. That's helpful. I run the board at night. And it's hard to find good salesmen. We get them out of school and train them. You've got to be able to create programming, put a dollar on it and go out and sell. Some people don't know how to do that.

**Q:** Do you plan to sell your operation at a profit?

**A:** No. Not unless I have health problems. Right now I'm reluctant to sell even a share in it.

*Charlene Gierkey is with Grass Roots Television Network in Cedar, MI.*



# Leased Access and the New Cable Law

by James N. Horwood and Joseph Van Eaton

Leased access is now required by law, thanks to Section 612 of S. 66. Although it remains to be seen whether the bill (as interpreted by the courts) will favor the access user or the cable system, the bill does appear to create significant access opportunities for non-profit and for-profit organizations. Indeed, it may be that as a result of the bill:

- Bogus First Amendment arguments raised by cable operators as an objection to leased access will be further undermined;
- Operators will face significant antitrust liability if they attempt to keep competing services off the air;
- Non-profit organizations will be able to force operators to allow them to lease channels at a preferential rate; and
- Channel users may be able to obtain refunds for amounts paid above the "reasonable price" for a channel, by challenging channel leasing agreements in court.

A major drawback is that the bill does not state clearly that the operator must provide reasonable technical assistance to lessees. Indeed, the legislative history states that the leased access provisions are not "intended to require a cable operator to provide marketing, billing, or other such services to an unaffiliated third party" using an access channel. If the obligation to provide a channel is read narrowly, the leased access provisions may be of little value.

Nonetheless, at this point, we believe potential users should be encouraged and not discouraged by the Act. Potential users should recognize that it is reasonable to read the bill as strongly supporting access, and they should resist any efforts the cable industry may make to convince franchising authorities, the FCC or the courts that a pro-operator interpretation is appropriate.

Section 612 establishes a right to "commercial use" of cable channels by persons and organizations which are not affiliated with the cable operator. (While the bill refers to "commercial use," the users may be for-profit or non-profit organizations and may offer for-profit or non-profit programming.) The bill explicitly establishes a pro-access purpose, a minimum channel set-aside for "commercial use," pricing provisions, and enforcement provisions.

## Purpose

The Act is intended "to assure that the widest possible diversity of information sources are made available to the public . . . in a manner consistent with growth and development of cable systems." Congress was not interested in assuring variety of programming types—it was focusing on the speakers. The Act is intended to provide access to programmers representing a social or political viewpoint that a cable operator may not wish to disseminate, and to permit others to offer programming which competes with program services already offered by the cable system.

The legislative history supports access by rejecting bogus First Amendment arguments raised by cable operators and others in opposition to leased access. The House committee report specifically a lengthy and thoughtful analysis of the issue.

## Channel Set-Asides

An operator with 36 or more activated channels must set aside a specified percentage of its channel capacity for "commercial use." An operator with 36 or more (but not more than 54) activated channels is required to set aside 10 percent of its channels not otherwise required for use by federal law or regulation. In a community with 6 must-carries and two FAA-restricted channels, the operator would be required to set aside 10 percent of 28 channels for commercial use—or 3 channels (fractions of channels are to be rounded upward). An operator with 55 or more (but not more than 100) activated channels must designate 15 percent of channels not otherwise required for use by federal law or regulation; an operator with more than 100 channels must designate 15 percent of all activated channels for commercial use.

For new systems with fewer than 36 activated channels, set-asides for commercial use may not be imposed (provisions for leased access in existing franchises for systems with fewer than 36 channels are still valid). It is not clear whether an operator's offer to provide channels in excess of the federal guidelines can be enforced in new franchises.

The "commercial use" set-asides are for one-way video programmers. Operators cannot be required to set aside channels for lease for two-way or non-video services, though of-

fers to provide such channels are clearly enforceable under the bill. At the time of renewal or for new franchises, potential lessors should be actively involved to encourage operators to provide for two-way leased access, and to encourage local franchising authorities to require, at a minimum, 36 activated channels.

## Prices

An operator is required to establish price, terms and conditions for service at a level "at least sufficient to assure that such use will not adversely affect the operation, financial condition or market development of the cable system." However, the price established must be "reasonable." The operator cannot exercise editorial control over the leased channel programming, but may consider content "to the minimum extent necessary to establish a reasonable price." (Content cannot be considered in establishing terms and conditions.) The price established can be challenged in court but will not generally be regulated by either the federal, state or local governments. Prices established by the cable operator are to be assumed "reasonable and in good faith" unless shown by "clear and convincing evidence to the contrary."

This pricing section is read by some to give an operator almost unlimited authority to set rates. Consider the following, however. Cable companies often assert that non-profit local programming attracts little audience. A cable operator making that assertion would be hard-pressed to argue that such programmers must pay a high lease charge to compensate the operator for audience fragmentation. If, on the other hand, an operator suggests that local non-profit programming will attract a large audience, then in setting prices, the operator considering audience fragmentation should also be required to consider subscribers attracted by the service. The legislative history suggests a "reasonable price" for non-profit news organizations will be different from the price for premium services such as HBO. Thus, non-profit organizations may be able to mount effective (and simple) challenges to established prices, terms and conditions by showing that they are similar to prices, terms and conditions established for premium services.



Prices, terms and conditions which effectively prevent programming competitors from providing service may well be illegal under the antitrust laws even if permissible under the cable bill; defenses to the prices established under the cable bill ("we would lose more money on our programming") may well be found to be evidence of anticompetitive intent. The industry may have outsmarted itself here: had it permitted local authorities to establish leased access prices through regulation, the operator may well have been protected to some extent from treble damage liability under the recent amendments to the antitrust laws.

Finally, while the "reasonable price" standard may seem vague, it should be recognized that a number of federal agencies have for years been charged with establishing "just and reasonable" rates in regulating other industries. The precedent established by these agencies may well be relied upon by courts in considering challenges to leased access

charges and thus this precedent may well limit operator discretion to establish prices.

### Enforcement

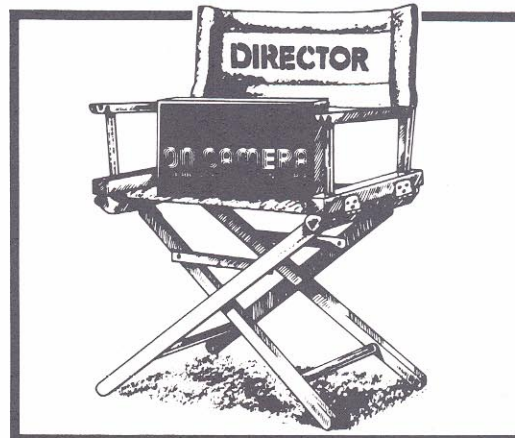
If a court finds that the price, terms or conditions established by an operator are unreasonable, it may order the operator to make channel capacity available and may further determine the appropriate price, terms, or conditions for the channel. In addition, the court can award actual damages, if it deems such relief appropriate. The legislative history states that Congress expects the courts to handle such claims on an expedited basis and to "utilize their ability to minimize any adverse impact on programmers" that delay may cause. It could be contended that in some circumstances, courts can require operators to provide service at rates lower than the established price while a challenge is being considered. It may also be the case that lessees will be able to enter into a leased access ar-

rangement, challenge the price, terms and conditions as unreasonable, and obtain refunds for amounts paid which a court ultimately finds to be in excess of the reasonable price.

Also, the FCC has enforcement powers under the bill. Any person may bring an action before the FCC, alleging that an operator has failed to make channel capacity available as required under the Act, and has done so in other circumstances as well. The Commission can then take steps to establish the appropriate price, terms and conditions for channel capacity, and (if it finds a pattern or practice of violations by an MSO) establish further rules as required to ensure that the operator provides a diversity of leased access information sources.

*James N. Horwood and Joseph Van Eaton are attorneys with the law firm of Spiegel and McDiarmid.*

# So you want to be a Director?



## ON CAMERA

### THE BBC VIDEO PRODUCTION COURSE

— the new training kit  
to help you produce livelier, more professional-looking programs  
that smooth the way to effective communication

1213 Wilmette Avenue  
Wilmette, IL 60091

CALL FOR DETAILS!  
FILMS INCORPORATED EDUCATION

TOLL FREE (800) 323-4222  
In Illinois call collect (312) 256-3200



# Cable Communications Policy Act of 1984: What It Means For Access

by Fred Johnson

The Cable Communications Policy Act of 1984 began to function as law on December 29, 1984. The legislation, which was created to provide a uniform regulatory environment for cable communications, will have an uneven impact on the many access arrangements that have been created throughout the country. Beyond the fact that the law largely grandfathers access channel capacity, there is very little that can be assumed about the new legislation's impact on any particular access center without first considering the local regulations that initially defined that center.

Since the passage of the new law, the cable industry has issued a number of statements, either through the National Cable Television Association or individual operators, proclaiming it will mean a whole range of deregulatory changes. However, these statements by the industry present their hopes and dreams and no more. There are many grey areas in the new cable law, and it will take a series of lawsuits over the next few years to clarify its meaning.

Therefore, any franchise changes proposed by the cable industry should be handled with a great deal of caution. Local governments should not consider any hasty franchise changes. The first step for access professionals and local governments is to educate themselves, and clarify how the new cable law may apply to their particular situation.

## Cable Channels For Public, Educational, and Governmental (PEG) Access

From an access perspective, the significant feature of the legislation is that for the first time Congress has clearly expressed that the public's right to access is important and protected by law. Section 611(c), 624(c), and 637(a)(1) all give local regulatory bodies the authority to enforce and regulate all the provisions in support of PEG access activity in franchises created before the effective date of the new law. This includes provisions supporting PEG access that were not requested in the RFP but which were proposed by the operator and included in the franchise.

Section 611(a) gives the franchising body authority to require channel capacity for PEG use on both the subscriber and institutional cable network. This authority extends to the

right to require rules and procedures governing the use of the PEG access channels.

A very critical part of section 611 is 611(d)(1 & 2). These provisions require the local regulatory body to create the rules by which the cable operator can take over unused access channel capacity for other purposes, and, conversely, rules by which the operator may be compelled to cease using those channels so they may be converted back to access use.

Obviously great care should be taken when creating these rules (see article on page 28). It would be very harmful if individual access channels were split between commercial and access use, or if unclearly written rules made it difficult to reclaim these channels. Access professionals must be very active in this rule making.

The provisions for PEG access clearly represent a very broad endorsement of access by Congress and should be interpreted that way. Implicit in this endorsement is recognition by Congress of the public's First Amendment rights over those of the cable operator's. The First Amendment right of the cable operator was a legal rationalization that has been unsuccessfully advanced by the industry in an effort to prevent government from requiring the provision of access channels.

## Modification of Franchise Obligation

The inclusion of access facilities and equipment in this section as something subject to modification was done at the insistence of the industry in the 11th hour of negotiations. It is the only section that even mentions the possibility of reducing access commitments in existing franchises and is a cause for concern.

Essentially, section 625(a)(1)(A) says that a cable operator may ask for relief from access provisions in existing franchises if they can demonstrate that the provision of access facilities and equipment is "commercially impracticable." The term commercially impracticable is a legal term from the Uniform Commercial Code. It is usually applied to contractual relations involving the exchange of physical objects or quantities. It is very difficult to prove commercial impracticability, because it involves proving the conditions,

which the operator is seeking relief from, were absolutely unforeseen. For example, when the 1967 war between Israel and Egypt closed the Suez Canal, and thus the flow of mid-east oil, this was not sufficiently unpredictable to relieve oil suppliers of their contractual responsibilities.

This section also allows modification of services that do not effect the mix, level, or quantity of service indicated in the franchise. This should not effect access services since it is stated further in this same section, 625(e), that access services can not be modified.

The importance of working to educate the local regulatory body about this legislation is no more apparent than in the contract modification section. The only way a cable operator may obtain permission to modify access provisions under this section is by receiving permission to do so from the local regulatory authority. The regulatory authority has 120 days from the date they received a request for modification from the operator to make a decision. If the regulatory body refused the request for modification, the operator's only recourse is to make an appeal in a U.S. District Court. However, the possibility that a cable operator will go to court over access provisions is very unlikely. Access provisions may be part of a broader lawsuit, but even then the law is clearly on the side of maintaining access.

Practically speaking, the only way a cable operator can fail to provide the access commitment is if they are allowed to do so by the local regulatory authority. Therefore, it is extremely important for access professionals to educate local governing bodies.

## Franchise Fees / In-Kind Payments

The franchise fee section, Section 622, establishes that all payments for, or in support of the use of PEG access facilities, is not part of the franchise fee and can not be deducted from the revenues generated by that fee, in franchises created prior to the passage of this legislation.

For franchises created after the passage of this legislation, only capital costs would not be considered a part of the franchise fee. The term "capital costs" is one of many areas of ambiguity in the legislation. Just what is a



capital cost? It is not defined anywhere. Obviously, it is in the interest of access to define that term as broadly as possible; certainly it will account for most costs associated with "services, facilities, and equipment" but that is not made clear in the bill.

Finally, in the area of franchise fees, Section 622(g)(2)(B) clearly eliminates the need to further discuss the Miami Case on in-kind payments, now before the FCC. The most critical issue in the Miami Case was that payments to the non-profit access corporation in Miami did not benefit all involved in the system, including the cable operator, and were thus considered payments in-kind and to be deducted from the franchise fee. The franchise fee section speaks clearly in this matter. However, the FCC has not spoken, and caution should be exercised when making assumptions about the FCC based on reason.

### Leased Access

Section 612, the leased access section, is probably the most confusing part of the new law. Although there is much that is problematic in the leased access language, it is encouraging that Congress requires cable operators to make channels available to third parties in order to insure a diversity of information sources for the public.

The leased access language can be understood to require rates that make the leased channels available to the struggling and least capitalized producers and programmers. However, it would be unrealistic to be optimistic about leased access considering the dismal record of enforcement and compliance in this area.

One thing is certain about leased access. Now is the time for the producers that need the leased access channels to act. If much time passes before the murky language in this section is clarified or challenged, the leased channels will become the domain of the rich and powerful (see article in this issue).

There are many more changes that bear discussion: the implications of the obscenity sections, rate regulation, and the placement of access channels on upper service tiers. They will all have an impact on access. Ultimately, the strength of any particular provision depends on the overall strength of the local regulatory situation.

It behooves anyone working in access to prepare as well as possible to defend the provisions in local franchises. The NFLCP is preparing materials that will be useful in understanding the new law as it comes into focus through the coming months; they can

also serve as a source of information on where to seek legal support.

*Fred Johnson is executive director of the Cincinnati Cable Access Corporation.*



## Announcing . . .

### THE CABLE JOB GUIDE

Describes entry-level opportunities in:

- cable systems
- program production & services
- engineering
- government
- law
- related fields

Includes 15 appendices of "Who's Who" in the cable industry, government, press, citizens' groups, plus placement services and training programs. (54 pages, \$9.50 postpaid.)

Also . . .

### THE COMMUNITY MEDIUM

The state of the art in cable. Includes technology overview, glossary, case studies of local programming, two-way services, educational uses. (180 pages, \$18.50 postpaid.)

### A GUIDE FOR LOCAL POLICY

Discusses legal and policy issues in cable. Covers franchising process, ordinances, consumer protection, franchise enforcement and administration, other issues. (130 pages, \$18.50 postpaid.)

\$31.50 postpaid for set of two. Discounts available for bulk orders.

Call or write for free brochure:

**The Cable Television Information Center**  
1500 North Beauregard Street  
Alexandria, VA 22311  
(703) 845-1705

## MUNICIPAL PROGRAMMING SHOWCASE

The NFLCP now presents a 30 minute sampler tape of some of the best municipal programming available. Programs covering different topics and formats from all across the country are featured. If you wish to buy or rent this tape, please fill out this form.

☐ Yes, I want to buy "Municipal Programming Showcase." Enclosed please find a check for \$100.

☐ Yes, I want to rent "Municipal Programming Showcase." Enclosed please find a check for \$40 to cover the price of a 7 day rental.

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Organization \_\_\_\_\_

Street \_\_\_\_\_ City \_\_\_\_\_

State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip Code \_\_\_\_\_ Telephone \_\_\_\_\_

*Make check payable to NFLCP*



# Rules and Procedures For Allocating Unused PEG Access Channels

by Speranza Avram

One of the most important statutes covering public, educational, and governmental access in the new cable law requires franchisors to establish rules and procedures for cable operators to take over unused access channels. Section 611 (d) states that franchising authorities must "establish rules and procedures under which the cable operator is permitted to use such [PEG access] channel capacity for the provision of other services if such channel capacity is not being used for the purposes designated." However, under the legislation the franchising authority may also adopt rules requiring the cable operator to return these channels when there is sufficient demand for access use.

It is made clear in the legislative history that this language applies to both existing franchises and new franchises. Therefore, these provisions demand the immediate attention of the public access community. Access professionals need to begin studying the particular circumstances surrounding access in their communities now so that they can suggest appropriate rules to their local governments.

## Suggested Approach

The kind of rules to suggest will vary depending on the amount of channel capacity available. Many older systems have only one or two access channels available, while newer franchises in urban areas may have 10 to 20 channels set aside for a variety of access uses.

Regardless of system size, access users should request that their city's rules state that the operator shall not be allowed to use access channels until all other channel capacity on the system is programmed. In many cases, the cable operator has reserve channel capacity available. It would be reasonable to require the operator to utilize these channels before using channel capacity dedicated to access use.

For systems with limited channel capacity available, it would be reasonable to request that operator use of channels be restricted to channels that are totally blank for a period of time (perhaps 90 consecutive days after the effective date of the legislation). This allows any potential access users to organize and use the available channel capacity.

One of the easiest ways to program a channel is to purchase an inexpensive

character generating system to create a "Community Bulletin Board." The necessary equipment can be purchased for under \$2,000 and the staff or volunteer time needed to coordinate this service is minimal. This is an effective way to program community channels pending more advanced uses.

Large, urban systems often have several access channels not being used, especially in the early stages of cable construction. Any rules promulgated by the city should allow for phased-in uses of these channels by restricting any operator use until a period after all cable construction is complete. Since even many operators do not use all of their capacity until after the system is completed, this would not be unreasonable.

If a cable operator insists on using access channels which contain programming on only a part-time basis, one option is to combine programs on several access channels, thereby separating access use from other services. This helps build an audience for access programs and maintains the noncommercial integrity of access channels.

Regardless of system size, any rules should contain the following provisions:

1. The operator must request to use the access channels in writing. This request should verify that the channel is not being used and specify the type of uses the operator plans.
2. The city must send a notice of this intended use to interested parties and request comments within a specified period of time.
3. The city must establish "trigger mechanisms" which allow the channel to be restored for access use (see below).
4. Should the trigger mechanisms be invoked, the city should give a written notice to the cable operator requesting that his use of the channel cease within a reasonable period of time.
5. Enforcement mechanisms should be included in case the operator refuses to cease use upon notice.

## Trigger Mechanisms

Access channels taken over by an operator can later be restored to PEG access through two kinds of triggers: "actual use" and "demand for use."

"Actual use" refers to the number of hours per day/week/month an access channel

contains programs. For systems with more than one access channel, a reasonable trigger might be when the channel is being used 80% of the time between 5 p.m. and 10 p.m. for 3 consecutive weeks. At this point the cable operator would be required to restore an additional access channel.

"Demand for use" refers to the number of people who have been turned away because of lack of channel capacity either in absolute terms or during a certain time period—prime time, for example. This requires that the access center keep accurate records of requests for use so this demand can be documented.

The new law does not allow the cable operator to unilaterally begin use of unprogrammed access channels, and the law allows cities to establish rules that protect dedicated access channels. Assuming a positive dialogue between the access community and local city officials, the establishment of access-use rules need not be viewed as a threatening procedure. The response of your city government to the numerous provisions relating to access under the new law will depend in a large measure on how city officials view access. Therefore it will be incumbent upon access users to involve local city officials in their activities and constantly promote the value of local programming.

---

*Speranza Avram is senior coordinator for the Sacramento Metropolitan Cable TV Commission.*



# Establishing Government Access Policies

by Andy Beecher

*This article begins a new column in the Community Television Review which is intended to promote communication among those who are interested and involved in local government programming on cable television. We feel the time is ripe for this new section. Over the past several years government access production centers have proliferated. This has provided new means to make local governments more accessible and understandable to their citizens; it has also improved and economized internal governmental communications.*

*Each installment of this column will feature a segment of issues, trends and other concerns of the government programmer.*

In inaugurating a government telecommunications programming operation, as with any new program, there is a reticence to over-regulate and to implant too many restrictions at the outset. Instead, we are likely to set some basic procedural guidelines and to leave the formation of elaborate policies for the other side of the bridge we hope we will never cross.

Certainly, we have all thought of those doomsday scenarios where the board member faces a camera and says "Vote for me on November 6," or where your mayor says that he wants you to cancel your live coverage of a library board meeting in favor of his ribbon-cutting ceremony at the new shopping mall; or where a creative, though over-zealous director finds a great extreme close-up of a developer (who happens to be his landlord) sweating out an answer during the city council meeting. However, with a good track record and a good working relationship with your elected officials, your city departments and your production crew, you think these things could never happen right here in River City; right? Perhaps. On the other hand, with our successes at making government access programming more a part of life in communities across this country, and with the rising public awareness of and interest in C-SPAN and other "government-in-the-sunshine" programs on the cable, these potential incidents are more likely to be noticed if they do occur.

In any case, many of us who operate local government programming operations have

received increasing numbers of inquiries about policies and procedures. At the 1984 NFLCP National Convention, two workshops addressed some of the ethical and policy issues that confront government access managers and advisory committee members. Some of these are outlined below so that they might be discussed in your communities and perhaps addressed in further detail in future issues of the *Community Television Review*.

## Administration

A focal point for discussion about government access policy is the very location of the agency charged with implementing this programming. Being a veteran of a government programming office which has functioned under six different city agencies in its nine-year existence, I am acutely aware of the pros and cons of each—at least in one city. A jurisdiction seeking a home for its cable programming operation might consider the following locations:

- **Department of Administration or Mayor's Office:** Close to where decisions are made, but perhaps too close to politics.
- **Cable Communications Office:** A logical, compatible choice, but may be criticized for having the "inside track" on funding, at the expense of public and educational access.
- **Library:** Compatible information service interests and philosophical similarities, but who is to have more input in the agency's funding and policies: the city council or library board?
- **Public Information Office:** If the jurisdiction has one, this may be the most logical choice. If not, the agency might be set up as a separate entity, and evolve into such an office.

## The Manager

It is important to determine who is to select and prioritize production and cablecast

requests. This is generally done by the manager of the agency, but are there guidelines to ensure that these decisions are being made both equitably and in the best interest of public information? What programs get the "prime" slots? Do you produce more public information programs or more in-house training and communications? Are there ethical problems with government agencies using franchise fee revenues to buy video equipment for noncable purposes? This may be a place for ongoing input from an advisory or policy committee.

## Advisory or Policy Committees

Another question is to whom the government access manager is responsible, besides his or her department head. Is there an advisory and/or policy board? Who makes up this group? Do they include elected officials, department heads, department liaisons, cable company officials, cable regulatory commission members or residents?

The following are a number of policy areas that such a group can become involved with:

- **Programming:** priorities and restrictions.
- **Staff:** development of job descriptions, and assistance in screening applicants.
- **Budget:** assistance in the development of an annual budget?
- **Technical Standards:** establishment of minimum technical standards for cablecasts.

## Coverage of Public Meetings

In covering council, board or commission meetings, are there production standards detailing how your crews approach these programs and react to situations? For example, do you predetermine camera angles and place restrictions on reaction shots, cover shots or other cutaways? Do you allow editing of any type for the replays of these meetings or voice-overs explaining the proceedings during the production? Is it permissible to include commentary before or after the meeting coverage? Do you allow editing of character generated agenda listings so that viewers are not reading these items in their original, legal form?



## Appearance of Elected Officials

Can your elected officials appear on the government access channel outside of the context of an official public proceeding? Can they have their own program? If so, do you place restrictions upon such appearances after they have filed for re-election?

Do you have an equal time policy for non-incumbent candidates, or a fairness policy for groups or individuals who take exception to statements or actions on the government access channel? Simply referring an individual who takes issue with your public official to the public access channel may not adequately allow them to address their concerns. For example, while your government access crew produced the original program, the access channel may require the respondent to produce their own reaction program, which may be too cumbersome for a respondent with limited resources.

If you have a candidates' debate, do you have a policy that will determine whether you will produce the program in spite of the failure of one candidate to appear?

## Choosing a Moderator

If your operation is to allow your government officials to communicate with the citizens on a panel discussion or call-in program, who will moderate the program? Who will choose the issues to be discussed and the panelists to respond to the callers' questions? Some cities have allowed a nonpartisan community group, such as the League of Women Voters, to do so. Others prefer to have the city provide the moderators.

## Commercials on Council?

With budgetary considerations, do you find it necessary to look for alternative funding for individual programs? Will you allow PBS-style sponsorship for your city council coverage or other programs on government access?

These are but a few of the questions which will arise in a discussion of policy development for a government access operation. Some agencies may feel that they can get by with little more than a general policy

statement. Others may go overboard and set so many standards that they discourage diversity and controversy on the channel. For those of us who are still coming to terms with developing these guidelines, dialogue among our local government users, our staffs, local

government observers, and citizen groups will help us in determining a balance.

*Andy Beecher is programming director at the Metropolitan Area Communications Commission in Beaverton, Oregon.*

# SOLUTIONS FOR SURVIVAL®

8 HALF-HOUR TELEVISION PROGRAMS

### THE LAST EPIDEMIC

clearly conveys the devastation one or more nuclear weapons would have on a civilian population and its environment. Possibly the most effective film for breaking through the public's denial and apathy surrounding the nuclear threat.

### IN THE NUCLEAR SHADOW:

#### What Can the Children Tell Us?

winner of 6 film festival awards, and nominated for an Academy Award (1984). In this powerful and moving documentary, 26 children of various backgrounds and ages express their doubts about personal and planetary survival. They urge action to prevent nuclear disaster so they might have a chance to grow up.

### WHAT SOVIET CHILDREN ARE SAYING ABOUT NUCLEAR WAR

How aware are Soviet children of nuclear war? Where do they get their information? Are they despairing or hopeful we can reduce the risks? These questions are answered by young people in Russia. The interviews were conducted by a group of American doctors in this extraordinary and inspiring documentary.

### WHAT ABOUT THE RUSSIANS?

14 experts, including William Colby, Robert McNamara and George Kennan, answer the questions most Americans ask about the super-powers' nuclear weapons competition. They explain how we can negotiate a meaningful arms control agreement with the Soviets and still maintain our national security.

### THE EDGE OF HISTORY

Admiral Noel Gayler and eleven other prominent individuals explode the myths that the nuclear weapons race is inevitable and that the American public is powerless to stop it. A documentary that calls individuals to action and leaves them with a sense of hope for the future.

### NUCLEAR WEAPONS AND NATIONAL SECURITY

A strategic analysis with Admiral Noel Gayler, who presents the most common illusions about nuclear weapons. He outlines the steps that must be taken to achieve real safety in the nuclear age, demonstrating that national security now depends upon international security.

### THE WORLD AFTER NUCLEAR WAR: THE NUCLEAR WINTER

The most important study of our time by the leading scientists in the U.S. including Carl Sagan and the U.S.S.R., which reveals that the use of just a small fraction of the world's nuclear arsenal would destroy civilization as we know it. In a satellite link-up, these American and Soviet experts urge all the world's people and politicians to recognize this potential catastrophe.

### WEAPONS IN SPACE

A National Teleconference on Space-Based Missile Defense. Could an "impenetrable shield" in space provide the ultimate defense for our country? Or do weapons in space make the likelihood of nuclear war on Earth more possible. This program is a thoughtful analysis of the feasibility and consequences of space-based defenses.

As a public service, EDUCATIONAL FILM AND VIDEO PROJECT offers these programs to TV and radio stations. Please contact us for further information.



## EDUCATIONAL FILM AND VIDEO PROJECT

1529 Josephine Street • Berkeley, California 94703 • (415) 849-1649



## Second of Three Parts

# Rethinking Public Access

## Networking: Vertical, Horizontal, Hard, and Soft

by Brian Kahin

Until recently, community cable programmers in Canada were not permitted to cablecast imported programming. The local origination channel was rigidly segregated from the other signals the system carried, which almost without exception came from the outside.

In this country, the rules are determined locally—and not by the franchising authority, but by the cable system or the access organization, and often just as unwritten policy.

As new systems come on line, it seems likely that the opportunities for importation, and exchange and networking in general, will increase geometrically. On the other hand, as demand for access time increases, gatekeeping programmers will be forced to make more and more scheduling decisions. Who gets prime-time slots? Who gets their programming repeated and when? Who gets to import programming and when? And what about repeating imported programming?

These questions may seem academic to local programmers who are striving hard to fill a couple of evening hours each day, but they will arise sooner or later. Virtually all access operations permit imported programming if it is packaged by a local organization—and often it need only be requested. When the Labor Institute of Public Affairs sought to place its *America Works* series on 60 local cable channels, it was able to get free carriage in every case. Not every organization may be so successful, but eventually guidelines are likely to become more or less standardized. Nonprofit organizations are likely to be preferred over individuals and commercial organizations (who may be required to lease time). There may be stratification among nonprofits with 501(c)(3) organizations having higher claims than trade associations, social clubs, and other “non-tax-deductible” entities. It is also possible that “time zoning,” (i.e., restricting certain programming to particular hours of days) may become widely accepted.

Much tussling over the First Amendment can be expected in all these areas. However, as a practical matter, access will be more useful to some organizations than to others. Some may do better to purchase exposure on local broadcast stations, which have much greater audiences, both built-in and potential.

Others may make better use of their resources by using print media. But the real test will not come until satellite delivery becomes a widespread and refined practice.

In the meantime, most community channel managers will probably remain more concerned about whether and how they should actively seek outside programming on their own. Should they initiate exchanges with neighboring programmers? Should they commission or acquire independently produced works? Or should they coproduce with independents or with neighboring systems? Do they want to act like producers, access facilitators or programmers?

Dedicated programmers are generally concerned with the variety of material they have to program, and, at least in the community television context, with adding to their overall audience. They are open to outside sources and share both material and information with other programmers. Their activities become institutionalized as catalogs, libraries, and exchanges.

But in the real world of community television, programmers are also producers and access facilitators who may have little time for extramural institutions which depend on volunteer labor. Consequently, these institutions are usually shortlived, and tape exchanges remain isolated and sporadic. Perhaps there needs to be a critical mass of interested programmers—and the only place that can be achieved is at the national level.

### Hard and Soft Interconnects

A tape exchange is a soft interconnect. A hard interconnect, such as the Gill/Viacom Bay Area Interconnect, is a live transmission path that is used regularly, typically carrying signals from one system head-end to another. This may be simply a way of facilitating signal delivery or it may be a means for pooling area-wide advertising for the local avails on national programming services such as ESPN and USA Network. The same result can be accomplished with a soft interconnect, i.e., delivering tapes of the commercials by hand for insertion at each headend.

A hard interconnect is not necessarily hardwired; it can use microwave—or satellite. All satellite-delivered services are hard inter-

connects; they are one-way, but all or part of a cable interconnect may be one-way.

A soft interconnect may involve transmission—at least if it is not simultaneous with the ultimate telecasting.

In fact, “hard” and “soft” are matters of degree. As a practical matter, there are two key variables: the regularity of the delivery and the scope of selection finally exercised by the programmer—actually two perspectives on the same process.

Regularity is a function of the periodicity, length, format, and scope of the delivery. A period of 24 hours on the same transponder over the whole continent is solid, efficient delivery. If the cable programmer picking up the signal retransmits it on the system in real time, then selectivity is zero. Economies of scale are matched with minimal transaction costs. The cable programmer doesn’t even have to know the program schedule.

In a truly soft interconnect, the high costs of making deliveries are matched by the high costs of learning what is available and making a selection. On the other hand, a soft interconnect preserves the function of the local programmer.

The PBS satellite interconnect is a hard and soft hybrid. The “core schedule” is fed during prime time five days a week—in two feeds, because of time zone differences. The core schedule includes the highly promoted programming that almost all stations carry. By broadcasting the feeds simultaneously, they reap the benefits of coordinated publicity. Most of the remaining schedule is treated as a soft feed for taping and playback, although stations may use portions as a hard feed if it happens to match their programming practices.

Public television stations also use a hard-soft system for delivering instructional programming to schools. They typically transmit large blocks during the school day with rights cleared for at least the school year, so that teachers can either pick the programming up live or tape it for replay at their convenience. Live use has been more common at the elementary level, where one teacher will have the same students all day and can easily work around the broadcast schedule. However, as videocassette recorders become more available, taping for playback increases because



of the control afforded over the viewing process as well the schedule. Stopping, starting, and replaying a tape is the ultimate "soft" link in the delivery process.

The Interregional Programming Service (IPS) operated by the Eastern Education Network (a public television cooperative) illustrates the economies of the satellite interconnect at the national level. The IPS uses the satellite interconnect to market programming that has already been produced. Previews of ten-minute clips are uplinked to enable stations to decide what they want to buy. If enough stations are interested to meet the price set by the producer, the entire program or series is sold to those stations. It is delivered over the satellite for taping if it is bought by at least eight or ten stations. Only when there are fewer purchasers is it more economical to copy and send individual tapes—and in that case, the producer is likely to withdraw the offer.

The public television system has of course undertaken a considerable investment over many years to arrive at a complex distribution system that accommodates many disparate interests. Many nonetheless feel that it has effectively abandoned localism—"the bedrock on which the system is founded." Indeed, although programming decisions ultimately remain in the hands of individual licensees, local production has suffered a long, ignominious decline, as the system relies increasingly on the visibility and economies of centralized production. Despite the common interest in community service, community television did not arise out of public television, and many will be prepared to argue that to emulate the structures of public television is to abandon the principles of access and meaningful public participation.

The final article in this series will review the development of access-like services on the national level and experiments in reusing and networking community programming. It will consider opportunities for combined hard and soft interconnection consistent with principles of both access and localism.

*Brian Kahin is coordinator for the Research Program on Communications Policy at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.*

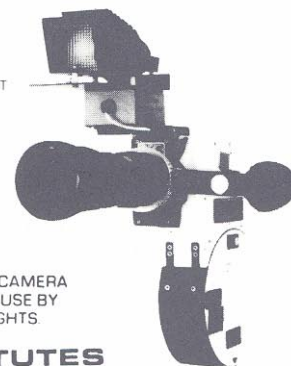
## LOW LUX CAMERAS NEED LIGHT

### DISADVANTAGES OF SHOOTING WITHOUT A VIDEO LIGHT (EVEN WITH 3 LUX CAMERAS)

- 1. GRAINY IMAGES.** SHOOTING IN LOW LIGHT REQUIRES TURNING UP THE GAIN CONTROL (DONE AUTOMATICALLY ON MOST CONSUMER CAMERAS MANUALLY ON INDUSTRIAL MODELS) WHICH SUBSTANTIALLY RAISES THE "NOISE" LEVEL AND CAUSES GRAINER IMAGES. THE CAMERA'S ELECTRONICS FUNCTION BEST WITH ZERO DB GAIN.
- 2. REDUCED DEPTH-OF-FIELD.** TO COMPENSATE FOR LOW LIGHT, THE CAMERA'S DIAPHRAGM MUST BE OPENED WIDER (DONE AUTOMATICALLY IN MANY CAMERAS), WHICH GREATLY REDUCES DEPTH-OF-FIELD (ZONE OF SHARPNESS) IN THE PICTURE.
- 3. REDUCED IMAGE CONTRAST.** VIDEO IMAGES SUFFER GREATLY REDUCED CONTRAST IN LOW LIGHT LEVELS — MUCH MORE THAN DO FILM IMAGES IN IDENTICAL SITUATIONS.
- 4. POOR SKIN TONES.** IN LOW LIGHT, IT IS DIFFICULT OR IMPOSSIBLE TO "WHITE BALANCE" THE CAMERA, AND THIS LACK OF BALANCE ESPECIALLY DEGRADES SKIN TONES (CAUSING GREENISH OR BLuish FACES).

### 13 REASONS TO BUY THE COOL-LUX™ MINI-COOL™ VIDEO LIGHT

- 1. SELECTED BY NASA FOR USE ABOARD THE SPACE SHUTTLES,** AFTER EXTENSIVE TESTING OF MANY COMPETITIVE LIGHTS.
- 2. HIGH LIGHT OUTPUT.** MORE LIGHT FROM 250 WATTS THAN OTHERS PRODUCE FROM 600 WATTS.
- 3. WEIGHT.** A MERE TWELVE OUNCES.
- 4. TEFLON COATED.** COMPLETELY COATED INSIDE AND OUT WITH CERTIFIED DUPONT TEFLON "S". TEFLON IS MORE DURABLE THAN PAINT AND IS ELECTRICALLY NON-CONDUCTIVE. EVEN RESISTS SALT WATER CORROSION.
- 5. ALUMINUM ALLOY CONSTRUCTION.** MADE ALMOST ENTIRELY OF AIRCRAFT-GRADE ALUMINUM ALLOY, LIGHT AND STRONG.
- 6. SAFETY SHIELD.** BUILT-IN TEMPERED-GLASS SHIELD PROTECTS LAMP FROM FOREIGN OBJECTS OR SPLASHED LIQUIDS, AND PROTECTS OPERATOR FROM POSSIBLE LAMP EXPLOSION.
- 7. DUAL INTERNAL FILTER SLOTS.** DUAL SLOTS ALLOW SIMULTANEOUS USAGE OF DAYLIGHT FILTER AND DIFFUSION LENS (BOTH AVAILABLE AS ACCESSORIES).
- 8. HIGH-TEMPERATURE RESISTANT WIRING.** BEST-PROTECTED WIRING OF ANY VIDEO LIGHT ON THE MARKET. ALL INTERNAL WIRING IS ENCLOSED IN CUSTOM-MADE SILICONE SLEEVE. POWER CORD IS HEAVY-DUTY, 16 GAUGE, 3-WIRE GROUNDED CONSTRUCTION.
- 9. AC/DC OPERATION.** MULTI-PURPOSE FIXTURE OPERATES FROM AC OR DC, SIMPLY BY INSTALLING AN AC OR DC LAMP AND THE APPROPRIATE CONNECTING CORD.
- 10. WIDE VARIETY OF LAMPS AVAILABLE.** 11 LAMPS AVAILABLE IN VOLTAGES OF 12, 14.4, 30 OR 120 VOLTS. SPOTS OR FLOODS, 25 TO 250 WATTS.
- 11. HEAT-FREE LIGHT BEAM.** SO COOL YOU CAN CLIP COLORED GELS TO THE BARN DOORS, AND THE GELS WON'T MELT OR IGNITE. DON'T TRY THIS WITH OTHER VIDEO LIGHTS!
- 12. MANY ACCESSORIES AVAILABLE.** MOUNTING DEVICES FOR EVERY SITUATION, ADAPTER CORDS FOR EVERY POWER SUPPLY, BATTERY PACKS AND BELTS, DIFFUSION LENS, DAYLIGHT FILTER, PHOTO DIMMER, BARN DOORS AND MORE.
- 13. GET A \$5.00 GIFT CERTIFICATE —AND A 16 PAGE FULL COLOR LIGHTING GUIDE BY SENDING \$3.50**  
To...



MINI-COOL™ MOUNTED ON 16MM CAMERA  
SPECIALLY-DESIGNED BY NASA FOR USE BY  
ASTRONAUTS ON SPACE SHUTTLE FLIGHTS

**ACCEPT NO SUBSTITUTES**

# COOL-LUX™

5723 AUCKLAND AVE  
N. HOLLYWOOD, CA 91601-2207  
(818) 761-8181



## Cable Caster Liability Insurance: A New NFLCP Service

"We've been sued." It's an all-too-common report in the communications industry these days, and it is a report increasingly heard by local cable programmers. In the early days of local cable programming, as programmers toiled in relative obscurity, the content of the programs caused little furor. Fortunately, local programmers are getting more attention and more viewers, by offering important and compelling shows. However, that increased public exposure increases litigation as well. The irony is that sometimes the best programming will attract a lawsuit.

Who will defend the lawsuit—who's responsible? The city franchise agreement requires the local cable operator to defend the city. The cable system operator likewise is demanding a defense from the people in charge of the local origination or access channel, if they're different from the system operator. The person responsible for L.O. or access programming gets indemnified by the access producer because the producer doesn't have enough money to pay the legal expenses. When that happens, the burden of defending the suit falls on the local programmer.

That's why the NFLCP now offers a comprehensive media liability insurance policy for its members.

About a year ago, the NFLCP began negotiations with Media/Professional Insurance, the nation's largest media underwriter. Together they provide policy for NFLCP members with the most thorough

coverage available for the content of local cable programming.

What is covered? Libel and invasion of privacy coverage are the heart of any media liability insurance policy, including this one. The potential for libel or invasion of privacy is as broad as the cable program spectrum. Libel is on L.O. news programs. Access panel discussions on controversial topics in which panelists may say unkind things about others also pose potential problems. Pointed, controversial programming about issues of public concern nearly always makes someone mad, sometimes mad enough to sue.

An invasion of privacy claim is always a possibility when people appear on television without giving consent. The risk of invasion of privacy increases as public access users become more adept and more aggressive in taking portable video equipment into neighborhoods, stores and other semi-private places, placing people in the public eye. In many ways that kind of programming is access television at its best, but it sometimes shows people at their worst, and lawsuits sometimes are the result.

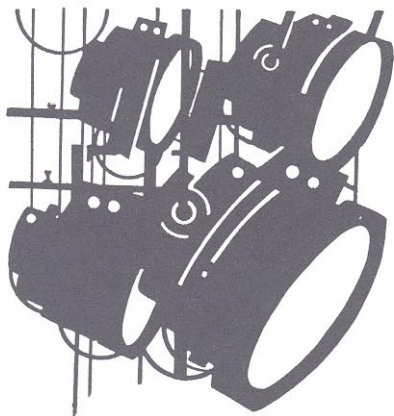
Copyright, with an array of performance rights, synchronization rights, and public domain confusion, is a constant concern for cable programmers. The NFLCP policy covers claims for copyright infringement as well. Coverage for trademark infringement and infringement of title or slogan are also included.

Occasionally a dispute may arise over who gets credit or money for coming up with an idea that turns into a program. Here, too, greater success can lead to litigation. One is unlikely to complain of "idea theft" when a program is a flop; but everyone wants credit for a winner and some want it badly enough to sue. The NFLCP policy anticipates such claims and covers them.

One coverage that distinguishes the NFLCP policy is coverage for errors or omissions in the content of programs. Suppose the host of the local origination home repair show tells viewers to use a ladder in a dangerous way, or the exercise show host tries to teach a particularly strenuous exercise. Financial shows, medical shows and cooking shows all can lead to harm if the advice given on the show is erroneous or misunderstood. The NFLCP policy covers those claims, too.

Who is insured? The policy covers organizational members of the NFLCP, and any of the organization's officers, directors or employees. Coverage is also provided for any person or organization the NFLCP member has agreed to indemnify. Independent producers, access channel users and other non-employees are not insured.

What does it cost? The cost is on a sliding scale varying with the member's budget and the number of channels operated, with premiums beginning at \$500 per year. A deductible of either \$1,000 or \$2,500 (depending on the member's size) applies to every claim.



What next? Contact the program administrators for a premium estimate and full information.

**Huntington T. Block Insurance**  
2101 L Street, N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20037  
or call toll-free 1-800-424-8830



## Classified Ads

### EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Pasadena Access Corporation  
Pasadena, California

Position available: April 15, 1985  
Salary Range: \$35,000 - \$40,000 Annually  
For position description and application procedures, please write or call:

Kathleen Hutchins  
Executive Recruitment City of Pasadena  
Personnel Department  
100 North Garfield  
Pasadena, CA 91109  
818-577-4366

### DIRECTOR OF PROGRAMMING DEVELOPMENT AND

### DIRECTOR OF OUTREACH AND PROMOTION

Staten Island Community TV, Inc. (SICTV), a new non-profit access corporation in New York City (borough population 400,000) is seeking applicants for two lead start-up positions.

The Director of Programming is responsible for training, curriculum design, and management; interface with area institutions; internship program; in-house production; and grants development. Requirements: Master's Degree in Communications with teaching, management, and production experience.

The Director of Outreach and Promotion is responsible for program outreach and development of viewership. To work closely with media, cable company, programmers and general public. Job involves production of promotion materials for SICTV, public relations, program scheduling, grants development, teaching and production. Communications background with public relations experience, graphic design experience, organizing and TV production skills preferred.

Competitive salaries and benefits. Send Resume to:

Trisha Dair  
Executive Director  
SICTV  
914 Richmond Terrace  
Staten Island, New York 10301  
(718) 727-1414

### PRODUCTION SUPERVISOR

The Southern Maine Cable TV Consortium seeks a Production Supervisor who will assist in developing and then supervise use of the studio facilities by students. SMCTC is a non-profit corporation managed by the University of Southern Maine to create original programming for cable tv.

Qualifications: professional and supervisory experience with video equipment, studio production and facility management. Salary: dependent on qualifications. Excellent fringe benefits. Interested persons should send resume and letter by March 1, 1985 to:

Barbara Eberhardt  
Program Director, Cable TV  
University of Southern Maine  
96 Falmouth Street  
Portland, Maine 04103

USM is an equal opportunity and affirmative action employer.

Send all ads with payment to:

NFLCP  
906 Pennsylvania Ave., SE  
Washington, DC 20003

The price of all classified ads in CTR is \$13 per column inch. There are 20 words in a column inch. To calculate the price of an ad, divide the number of words by 20 and multiply that times 13. The minimum price for a classified ad is \$13. All checks must be made payable to NFLCP. For more information contact: Paul D'Ari, NFLCP, 906 Pennsylvania Ave., SE, Washington, DC 20003, (202) 544-7272.

### Local Cable Advertising

continued from page 9

version of this 34,000 circulation daily—but they also have a classified ad channel which offers a full color picture of an item for sale, along with the price and seller's phone number. It complemented the newspaper, but in an entirely different advertising form.

To utilize local cable advertising most effectively, a business must consider what the medium offers that cannot be found in any other medium. In some cases, the answer can be very obvious, yet exciting.

Here is an example. A major store in the Southwest sent out invitations to its customers to join them in a series of mini-seminars on health and beauty care. On Monday, there was a seminar on skin care and make-up instruction for the career woman. On Tuesday, the store had a program on how to update and build a wardrobe. On Wednesday, there was a discussion of hair care and new hairstyles. On Thursday, the authors of a new book on aerobics demonstrated basic exercises and dance—with a presentation of summer swimwear.

Sometimes, the most obvious opportunity is the most elusive, and in this case, it was. Only after the four-day program was completed did the director of advertising realize that the promotion effort could have been extended by having the local cable system tape the different events and present them as a video promotion accompanied by the latest in summer fashions and beauty care. The store could have expanded the number of women participating in the event many times.

### Profiting From Simplicity

The overriding characteristic of all cable advertising is "simplicity." It is not television advertising as you know it when you see a 30-second commercial on the local late evening news, on *Good Morning America* or on *60 Minutes*. It is a blend of suburban papers, talk radio, and video. It is simple, inexpensive, and it is the kind of advertising that is designed to win sales, not creative awards.

The promise of cable to suburban advertisers is that it will open up a video medium to them in a new affordable manner. To the local cable system, it will create a powerful new revenue stream. The ideas are limitless—and in fact, are limited only by your imagination.

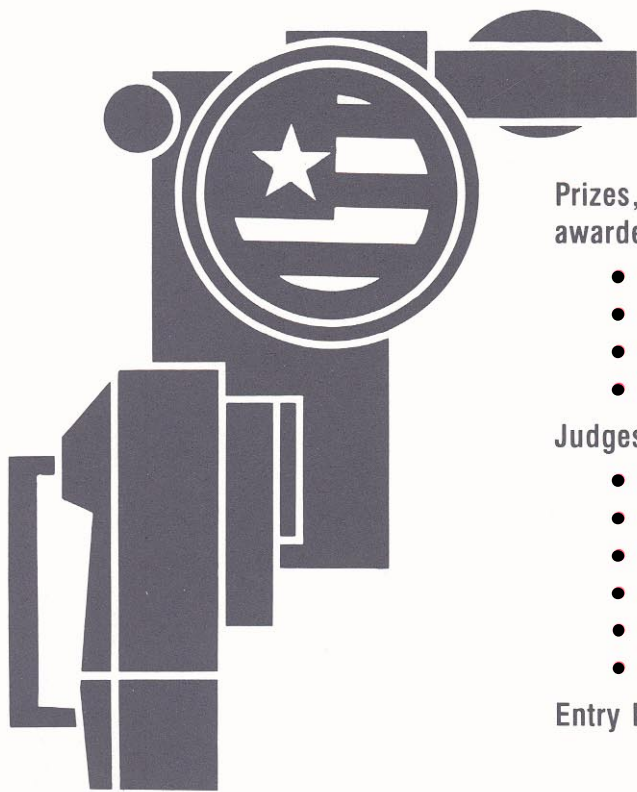
Ronald B. Kaatz is a senior vice president and director of media concepts for J. Walter Thompson USA. The second edition of his best selling book, "Cable: An Advertiser's Guide to the New Electronic Media" (Crain Books) will be published early next spring.



A CALL FOR ENTRIES...

# VISIONS

## OF U.S. VIDEO CONTEST



Entries invited in Beta, VHS, & 8mm Video

Prizes, including Sony's Betamovie & Beta HiFi,  
awarded in four categories:

- Fiction
- Non-Fiction
- Experimental
- Music Video

Judges:

- Francis Coppola
- David Byrne
- Shelley Duvall
- Tom Shales
- J. Hoberman
- Debbie Allen

Entry Deadline: June 30, 1985

write:

Video Contest  
Box 200  
Hollywood, CA 90078





# NFLCP Membership— Your Ticket to Free Issues of the Community Television Review

## NEW MEMBER ENROLLMENT FORM

### INDIVIDUAL:

\_\_\_\_ Community Associate/Student  
(\$35)

\_\_\_\_ Patron (\$100)

\_\_\_\_ Professional (\$50)

\_\_\_\_ Charter Life (\$500)

### ORGANIZATION:

\_\_\_\_ Non-profit organization  
(\$90)

\_\_\_\_ Library (\$75)

\_\_\_\_ Educational Institution  
(\$90)

\_\_\_\_ For-profit organization  
(\$150)

Government Entities:  
Population Size:

\_\_\_\_ Under 100,000 (\$100)

Cable System or MSO:  
No. of Subscribers:

\_\_\_\_ Under 10,000 (\$150)

\_\_\_\_ 100,000-500,000 (\$150)

\_\_\_\_ 10,000-50,000 (\$400)

\_\_\_\_ Over 500,000 (\$200)

\_\_\_\_ Over 50,000 (\$600)

("Government Entities" includes  
municipalities, states, counties and  
cable commissions.)

("Cable System/MSO" includes  
cable company-operated access  
and local origination facilities.)

Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
(or Organization) (please print)

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: ( ) \_\_\_\_\_

Contact Person: \_\_\_\_\_  
(Organizational Members Only)

(NOTE: These rates will be in effect until Aug. 31, 1985)  
Make your check/money order payable to: **NFLCP**

Mail to: National Federation of Local Cable Programmers  
906 Pennsylvania Ave. SE  
Washington, D.C. 20003



Community Television Review  
NFLCP  
906 Pennsylvania Avenue, S.E.  
Washington, D.C. 20003

Comm ARTS

ATTN: ROBERT MUHLBACH  
MSU  
INSTRUCTIONAL & PUBLIC TV  
EAST LANSING MI, 48824  
CS/NPD/0885 00044

Non-profit Org.  
U.S. Postage  
PAID  
Washington, D.C.  
Permit No. 4032



# A special offer for members of

## The National Federation of Local Cable Programmers

**Videography**  
JAN 1984 \$2.50

ANNUAL STUDIO SURVEY COLOR CAMERA GUIDE  
GET YOUR BOSS READY FOR PRIME TIME

**SPECIAL VIDEO WRAP-UP**  
EXTENDED HIGHLIGHT ACTION PLUS REPORTS BY  
MARK SCHUBIN, MICHAEL RESS, DAVID ALLEY, AND JUDITH COFFERT

**Videography**

LOCAL CABLE  
PRODUCTION PROFILES  
CONVERSATION  
WITH MARTY CALLNER  
CABLE'S ACE DIRECTOR

**Videography**  
MAY 1984 \$2.50

A PRODUCER'S GUIDE TO  
CABLE NETWORK SERVICES  
VIDEO SOFTWARE MARKETERS  
DUPLICATION FACILITIES

MARK SCHUBIN SCOPES OUT TEST GEAR  
CONVERSATION WITH  
LIFETIME'S DWYER-DOBBS:  
DOES CABLE HAVE  
A NEW LEASE ON LIFE?

**Videography**  
JULY 1984 \$2.50

VIDEOCONFERENCING GUIDE  
A BABY BELL TAKES A BIG VIDEO MEETING  
BUYER'S GUIDE TO EARTH STATIONS  
CONVERSATION WITH COMSAT DBS  
EXECUTIVE MICHAEL ALPERT

REMOTE PRODUCTION  
FACILITIES ROUNDUP  
VIDEO VAN VENDORS

**Videography**  
FEB 1984 \$2.50

HANDS ON  
ELECTRONIC GRAPHICS  
INSIDE THE PAINTING  
AND ANIMATION BOUTIQUES

ANNUAL  
CHARACTER GET  
CONVERSATION WITH ROGER  
CAPTAIN OF ABC'S OLYMPIC GRAPHICS

from **Videography**  
the monthly magazine  
for the video professional



## Local Cable Production Profiles

How four cable franchises are focusing on the local angle

by Susan Chomsky

On the whole, local cable programming is still in its infancy. While it's true that some of the most innovative and original programming is being produced by local cable channels, the industry as a whole is still in the early stages of development. However, four local cable franchises are focusing on the local angle, and their efforts are beginning to pay off.

Although local programming must compete with the national networks, it has a distinct advantage: it can focus on the local community. This allows local cable channels to provide programming that is relevant to their viewers and to build a strong sense of community.

### GROUP W CABLE OF KANSAS CITY

Group W Cable of Kansas City is a local cable franchise that has been successful in building a strong sense of community. The channel focuses on local programming, including news, sports, and entertainment. This has allowed Group W to build a loyal following of viewers who appreciate the local focus.



Sharon Van Pelt, Group W Cable of Kansas City news anchor.



One of the many cable professionals who are making a difference in the industry.



Another cable professional contributing to the growth of the industry.



A third cable professional working hard to make a difference.



A fourth cable professional dedicated to the local community.

### ROGERS CABLE SYSTEMS

Portland, OR

Rogers Cable Systems is a local cable franchise that has been successful in building a strong sense of community. The channel focuses on local programming, including news, sports, and entertainment. This has allowed Rogers to build a loyal following of viewers who appreciate the local focus.



## Conversation with Mary Alice Dwyer-Dobbin

Lifetime's programming chief tells how the merger of Daytime and Cable Health Network produced a network with a life of its own

The subject is cable, and more specifically, the new and old cable. But for Mary Alice Dwyer-Dobbin, the subject is the future of cable. As Lifetime's programming chief, she is responsible for the network's success, and she is looking ahead to the future of the industry.

Dwyer-Dobbin is a woman who has been in the cable industry for many years. She has seen the growth of the industry and the challenges it has faced. She is now looking ahead to the future of the industry and the role of cable in that future.

She is a woman who is passionate about the industry and the role of cable. She is looking ahead to the future of the industry and the role of cable in that future. She is a woman who is passionate about the industry and the role of cable.

## Who's Who in Cable LOP

A report on the great minds who put their minds on tape

The following is a list of the great minds who put their minds on tape. This is a report on the great minds who put their minds on tape.

The following is a list of the great minds who put their minds on tape. This is a report on the great minds who put their minds on tape.

The following is a list of the great minds who put their minds on tape. This is a report on the great minds who put their minds on tape.

The following is a list of the great minds who put their minds on tape. This is a report on the great minds who put their minds on tape.

The following is a list of the great minds who put their minds on tape. This is a report on the great minds who put their minds on tape.

The following is a list of the great minds who put their minds on tape. This is a report on the great minds who put their minds on tape.

The following is a list of the great minds who put their minds on tape. This is a report on the great minds who put their minds on tape.

The following is a list of the great minds who put their minds on tape. This is a report on the great minds who put their minds on tape.

The following is a list of the great minds who put their minds on tape. This is a report on the great minds who put their minds on tape.

The following is a list of the great minds who put their minds on tape. This is a report on the great minds who put their minds on tape.

The following is a list of the great minds who put their minds on tape. This is a report on the great minds who put their minds on tape.

The following is a list of the great minds who put their minds on tape. This is a report on the great minds who put their minds on tape.

The following is a list of the great minds who put their minds on tape. This is a report on the great minds who put their minds on tape.

The following is a list of the great minds who put their minds on tape. This is a report on the great minds who put their minds on tape.

The following is a list of the great minds who put their minds on tape. This is a report on the great minds who put their minds on tape.

The following is a list of the great minds who put their minds on tape. This is a report on the great minds who put their minds on tape.

The following is a list of the great minds who put their minds on tape. This is a report on the great minds who put their minds on tape.

The following is a list of the great minds who put their minds on tape. This is a report on the great minds who put their minds on tape.

The following is a list of the great minds who put their minds on tape. This is a report on the great minds who put their minds on tape.

The following is a list of the great minds who put their minds on tape. This is a report on the great minds who put their minds on tape.

The following is a list of the great minds who put their minds on tape. This is a report on the great minds who put their minds on tape.



A cable professional working hard to make a difference.

Another cable professional contributing to the growth of the industry.

A third cable professional working hard to make a difference.

A fourth cable professional dedicated to the local community.

A fifth cable professional working hard to make a difference.

A sixth cable professional contributing to the growth of the industry.

A seventh cable professional working hard to make a difference.

An eighth cable professional dedicated to the local community.

A ninth cable professional working hard to make a difference.

A tenth cable professional contributing to the growth of the industry.

A eleventh cable professional working hard to make a difference.

A twelfth cable professional dedicated to the local community.

A thirteenth cable professional working hard to make a difference.

A fourteenth cable professional contributing to the growth of the industry.

A fifteenth cable professional working hard to make a difference.

A sixteenth cable professional dedicated to the local community.

A seventeenth cable professional working hard to make a difference.

A eighteenth cable professional contributing to the growth of the industry.

A nineteenth cable professional working hard to make a difference.

A twentieth cable professional dedicated to the local community.

**Congratulations!** As a member of NFLCP, you're entitled to a special subscription rate for Videography, the monthly magazine for the video professional. The regular one-year subscription price is \$15.75—you pay just \$12.

When you subscribe to Videography, you'll have the world of professional video at your fingertips: equipment guides and

reports, services roundups, articles on applications and techniques, interviews, commentary on technology, art, legislation and production...

Use the order form below to start your subscription today. If you're already subscribing, use the card to renew your subscription at the special NFLCP rate. Do it today!

# Videography

Subscriber Service Center  
Post Office Box 658  
Holmes PA 19043

**Yes! I want to take advantage of Videography's special rates for members of The National Federation of Local Cable Programmers.**

**My check for \$12\* is enclosed.**

- ☐ Start my one-year subscription to Videography with the next issue.
- ☐ I'm a Videography subscriber now. Extend my subscription for one year.

**\*Payment must accompany order. Rate good in the U.S. only—elsewhere: \$20.25 in U.S. funds. Offer expires Dec. 31, 1985.**

DC 4

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Title \_\_\_\_\_

Company \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_

State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Our circulation audit requires this information. Please check the ONE category that best describes your place of employment (or primary job, if you have more than one):

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| 01 <input type="checkbox"/> Business/industrial firm                 | 09 <input type="checkbox"/> Cable TV station or MSO               |
| 02 <input type="checkbox"/> Medical/scientific institution           | 10 <input type="checkbox"/> Cable programming network             |
| 03 <input type="checkbox"/> Government/military organization         | 11 <input type="checkbox"/> Video software marketer               |
| 04 <input type="checkbox"/> Educational/other non-profit institution | 12 <input type="checkbox"/> Video equipment manufacturer          |
| 05 <input type="checkbox"/> Studio/postproduction facility           | 13 <input type="checkbox"/> Video dealer or distributor           |
| 06 <input type="checkbox"/> Production company                       | 14 <input type="checkbox"/> Independent consultant                |
| 07 <input type="checkbox"/> Commercial TV station or network         | 15 <input type="checkbox"/> Video artist/independent videographer |
| 08 <input type="checkbox"/> Educational TV station or network        | 16 <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____                          |